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A Compendious

V I E W
OF THE
RELIGIOUS
SYSTEM

Maintained by the SYNOD of RELIEF;

Together with
A distinct Account of the Points in *Difference*
between the *Synod of Relief* and the *National Establishment* on the one Hand; and
the *Secession* on the other.

To which is subjoined,
An APPENDIX, containing a few *Remarks* on a *Late Anonymous Publication* against the *Relief*.

By PATRICK HUTCHISON. A. M.
Minister of the Gospel, in *St. Ninian's*.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Gal. v. 1.

“ In Necessarijs Unitas,
“ In Non Necessarijs Libertas,
“ In Utrisque Charitas—*Witsius*.

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TO THE READER.

A Late anonymous publication, intituled, the Relief Scheme considered, which bears evident marks of an associate pen, was the occasion of presenting the following pages to the inspection of the candid public. The author of that pamphlet is commonly said to be an Antiburgher Clergyman in Glasgow. And had I not thought, that the cause of truth, and the characters of men, were deeply injured by this author, I should have judged it improper to publish any thing on the points in difference between Protestant denominations in this country, at a time when the general attention of the nation should be directed against popery, the common enemy of our invaluable privileges sacred and civil. But as this author has made an audacious, unprovoked attack upon the principles of the Relief Synod, this will fully justify a present attempt to vindicate them. He complains in his performance, that the form of the Relief-church, and her tenets, are concealed from the view of the world. I thought her system of doctrines and principles had been pretty generally known, as her ministers, in their public ministrations, are abundantly explicit on these things. But to silence all complaints of this nature, in the following pages the reader is presented with a short specimen of the doctrines, maintained and taught in the Relief-church, and the points, in which she differs both from the National Establishment, and the Secession in Scotland.

I have only to make of my readers one request, viz. that before they form their judgment of the following performance, they will with candor and attention read the whole, and then approve or condemn it, according as it is agreeable or contrary to the infallible word, and what the spirit saith to the churches.

If what is here presented to the publick inspection be blessed of God to enlighten and confirm these connected with the Relief Synod, in the knowledge and belief of their principles, to promote the knowledge of truth, holiness, and love among professing christians, and to give a proper check to a lying, defamatory spirit, the end of the author will be gained.

PART I.

A compendious view of the religious system maintained and taught by the Synod of Relief.

IT is not intended in this small treatise to give a description of all the doctrines and truths of the word of God. This would be a work of much time and labour. All designed is to bring a variety of the capital points of the Christian system into a narrow compass, to which the other parts of divine truth are reducible and analagous; that the reader, may in a short connected series, have a clear apprehension of divinity, as it is contained in the sacred records, and what is the strain of preaching among the relief ministers, who are represented by professed witnesses for truth as *deluding* the generation, and *relieving* them from the yoke of Christ.

The great primary radical truth revealed in scripture, and the foundation of all religion is the existence of God. On this great truth all other truths in the divine oracles are built, and were this foundation sapped and the existence of deity destroyed, all religion would be banished out of the world.

The knowledge of God's existence in the unity of his essence is attainable by the light of nature, by surveying these indelible characters and impressions of divinity, which appear in the material system. So congenial is the belief of deity to the human mind, and such excellent monitors of his existence are the works of his hands, that no nation has ever been known entirely destitute of the knowledge of a supreme being, tho' these only, who enjoyed the benefit of a divine revelation, know how to worship him in an acceptable manner.

But tho' mankind, by the light and improvements of reason, can attain the knowledge of God's being, and the Oneness of his essence, they cannot by this medium of information attain the knowledge of three distinct subsistences, or personalities in the same divine essence.

A Trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence is a branch of knowledge attainable only by divine revelation.

lation. And to those who are acquainted in any tolerable degree with the inspired oracles, this truth is clear as a sun-beam, so that he that runs may read it.

In the beginning of the book of inspiration we are informed of the creation of all things by God, and particularly of the creation of *man*, the noblest part of his works in this lower world, whom, in subordination to himself as his supreme Lord, he placed over the other works of his hands. All the creatures in this world were subjected to him, birds of the air, beasts of the field, and whatsoever moveth in the paths of the sea.

The first man was called Adam, a name expressive of his original, as formed out of the dust of the earth, to teach him humility, and dependence on God. His creator breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living person. Besides the essential faculties of his soul, he was brightly adorned with the image of God, and possessed as much knowledge of the divine nature and will, as was suitable to his condition as an innocent creature, together with sufficient power to do his duty. God made him upright, having his will in perfect subjection to his heavenly enlightened mind, and his affections placed upon the supreme good.

Being formed after the image of God, and adorned with his fair resemblance, God entered into a covenant with him, as the publick head of that numerous family, who were to spring from him by ordinary generation. For his accommodation, God placed him in paradise, where he had every thing entertaining to the sight, and pleasing to the taste, under the easy restriction of abstaining from the tree of knowledge of good and evil: which prohibition was intended to manifest his creator's just authority over him, and to be the trial of his virtue and obedience. A severe threatening was denounced if he transgressed the royal mandate of heaven, 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' This threatening was equally to affect him and his posterity. At the same time, the threatening of death upon transgression implied a promise of life to Adam and his posterity, if he had performed the condition of the covenant, by yielding perfect and persevering obedience during the time appointed for the continuance of his probationary state. Had he kept the covenant, he and his
offspring

offspring would have been confirmed, like the elect angels, in a state of unchangeable goodness. But being seduced by the devil, and the solicitation of his wife, he tasted the fruit of the prohibited tree, and hence the source of all our woe. By the disobedience of this one man all his posterity are made guilty. Being their federal head, by the divine constitution, the sin he committed in that capacity is imputed to them, and they are as much exposed to the penal sanction of the covenant, as if they had committed the original transgression in their own persons. The death threatened in that primitive constitution was threefold, temporal, spiritual and eternal. Accordingly whenever Adam sinned, he lost his spiritual life, the image of God and a power of living to him in holy obedience. The seeds of mortality were sown in his constitution, which gradually sprung up and strengthened in his frame, till they brought him to his original dust. And from the time of his transgression, he was exposed to eternal death.

The life promised in the covenant was opposed to the death threatened. Had Adam persevered in innocence, he and his posterity would never have been subjected to natural death. Spiritual life they would have enjoyed in all its beauty, energy, and glory, and in due time obtained everlasting happiness.

Some indeed censure the equity of this constitution, whereby Adam was made the federal head of his posterity, and think it extremely hard, that all his children should be ruined by an offence, which they never committed. But it must be an equitable constitution, because it was framed by that great being, whose nature is perfectly holy, and all whose works and appointments are in righteousness. Yea, it were easy to show, that the constitution of Adam's federal headship was more favourable to the human race, and gave them a much fairer probability of happiness than if every man had been put upon a personal trial of obedience; for in this covenant Adam had the eternal happiness or misery of many millions of his descendants, as a motive to obedience, which would not have been the case with his posterity, had every man stood trial for himself. He had too the motive of love to his posterity, as the common and original parent of that great family, who were to spring from his loins, which they would have wanted themselves. He had

had also as a motive to obedience superior to his posterity; the manifold sweetneses and allurements of paradise itself, the richest and most beautiful spot of the new created earth, a place prepared by infinite goodness itself for his entertainment and happiness; together with the additional motive of the tree of life, which grew in the midst of the garden, that on every occasion it might appear to his bodily eyes, as a material and visible representation of that glorious and happy life, which was promised in the covenant, if the condition of it had been performed. And if innocent Adam, in such advantageous circumstances, and having such superior motives to obedience, was overcome by the tempter, what probability is there that his posterity would have stood a trial of their own personal virtue, in less advantageous circumstances, and succeeded better than their progenitor had done?

As by virtue of Adam's federal representation his posterity were considered as one person with him in law, what took place with him holds also with them. The guilt of his fatal transgression was not only charged on him, but his soul was corrupted in all its faculties. His understanding was darkened, his will perverted, and his affections misplaced. And the very same is the situation of all his posterity; they have guilt *imputed* and sin *inherent*. Adam's sin is imputed to them, as he was their *federal head*, and corruption of nature is conveyed from him to them, as their *natural root* in the way of ordinary generation.

The covenant of works being once violated, Adam ceased to act any more in the *capacity* of a federal head, and therefore all his future actions, whether of disobedience as a sinner, or of obedience as a believer, could neither procure life nor death to his posterity; because he acted, ever after the fall, *in a single personal capacity*. And even the law itself became weak, and lost its power to give life to Adam, after he became a sinner, 'this was what the law' could not do in that it was weak thro' the flesh,' as Paul observes: In which expression of the apostle there is a two-fold weakness of the law pointed at; not only an incapacity to give life, on account of the flesh, or corruption of law transgressors; but a weakness in the law itself, or an incapacity to give life unto sinners, in respect of the appointment of God, and the original design of the covenant of works.

works. It was so constituted by its great framer that it could give life to man *innocent*, but not to man *guilty*. Its language to Adam was, do and *live*, transgress and *die*. The promise of life in that covenant was only made to man persevering in holiness: as soon as he offended, he was cut off from the promise, and subjected to the penalty. And in this sense all his posterity are under the law of works, in their natural condition, and will remain under it for ever, those excepted, who are the objects of distinguishing love, and interested in a better covenant.

This better covenant is with peculiar propriety called the covenant of grace; because grace divinely rich and free was the original spring of it, and shines conspicuous in all its parts. As by the first covenant sin reigns to death, so by the new covenant grace reigns thro' righteousness to eternal life by Jesus Christ. The first covenant was made by God with *Adam*, as the publick head of all his natural offspring. The second covenant was made by God with *Christ*, as the publick head of all his spiritual seed; and in this respect Adam was the type of him, that was to come. The first Adam was bound to perform the *condition* of the covenant of works for all those, whom he represented, and the second Adam was bound to perform the *condition* of the covenant of grace, for all those, whom he represented; with this difference, that Adam was obliged, in point of duty, to engage for his posterity, when God *proposed* the covenant to him, whereas the son of God was *disposed* to undertake the redemption of his people, by the bowels of his own love.

This covenant of peace was between the Father and the Son, from eternity, and all the parts of this wondrous plan were adjusted with infinite wisdom, counsel and discernment. It was an act of grace in the Father to *accept* of his own Son in this covenant, as the surety of sinners, as well as in the Son to become their surety. But tho' the first and second Adam agree in being federal heads, their *federal representation was not of equal extent*. Adam in the first covenant represented all his natural descendents. Christ in the second represents the elect only, or all those, who from eternity were given to him by the Father, to be redeemed from misery, and to obtain salvation with eternal glory. The rest of the human race were passed by in the decree of election; and left to possess that heritage of wrath, to which they

they are born, as the descendents of Adam, and under the covenant of works. And no impeachment of the divine rectitude can arise from this, any more than from leaving the apostate angelic tribe to perish irretrievably in their sin. When reasonable creatures sin against God, the perfection of his nature requires, that their sin should be punished according to its demerit, and if they never share in divine grace, it is what God is not their debtor to confer, who is free to do with his own as he pleaseth. And those, who are the blessed objects included in the decree of election, are indebted for this inestimable privilege to the free and distinguishing grace of God, and not to any thing in themselves, or done by them in time. The love of Jehovah was the cause of their election; their faith, love, repentance, and good works, are the fruits of election, and flow as necessarily from the great source of electing love as beams of light issue from the sun. They were chosen in Christ as their new covenant head, that they might be holy, not because they *would* be holy.

It was to accomplish the redemption of this chosen seed that the Son of God was, in the fulness of time, made flesh. He assumed the nature of those, whom he was to redeem into union with his divine personality, that being related to heaven in respect of his divinity, and to earth in respect of his humanity, he might more fitly be the days-man between God and man, and perform the office of a mediator. The nature, which he assumed into union with himself, was perfectly holy, that it might be qualified for subsisting in union to his divinity, and for that obedience which he was to perform as our surety. He was not included in the federal representation of the first Adam; that he might be free from the imputation of his sin. He was conceived in a virgin's womb, by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, that he might be free from that depravity of nature, which is conveyed from Adam to his posterity, by ordinary generation. A part of the virgin's substance was sanctified by the Holy Spirit, freed from all sinful pollution or tendency towards it, and separated or set apart for the holy purpose of forming our Lords body. The particular manner, in which the Holy Ghost accomplished this divine operation, is veiled in mysterious secrecy, and where the scriptures do not give us a key, we are not at liberty to pick the lock.

But tho' by virtue of the act of assumption, our Lord united a real human nature to his divinity, he did not assume a *human person*. To constitute a human person, a true body and a reasonable soul must be united, and these must subsist *distinctly* by themselves. But it was otherwise with our blessed Lord; for tho' he had a real human nature, a true body and reasonable soul united together, yet these never had a *separate subsistence of their own*; but from the very moment of his supernatural conception, by the overshadowing spirit, they subsisted in *union* to his divine personality, as the Son of God. He has therefore a human nature, but one divine person for ever.

When the two natures were united in his person they were not blended with one another; tho' closely united, they remained distinct. By the personal or hypostatical union, as divines call it, our Lord's divine nature was not *converted* into his human nature, neither was his human nature *converted* into his divine nature, but each nature remained distinct, tho' united to the other, and retained its own peculiar and essential properties.

The human nature, which our Lord assumed, was richly supplied with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, to support and strengthen him in the course of his painful obedience and sufferings, as the surety of his people. As their surety it became him to fulfil all righteousness. A twofold debt they owed, a debt of obedience, and a debt of punishment, neither of which they were able to pay. Both these debts were paid by him for them. His righteousness, which was the performance of the *condition* of the new covenant, consisted of three parts, the holiness of his nature, the purity of his life, and his sufferings from the sordid manger to the bloody cross. The law of God required the most perfect rectitude of soul, as well as perfect holiness of life, and the first in order to the last. Our Redeemer answered both these requisitions, in the most perfect manner; for he was the holy thing born of a virgin, and in his life he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners. The first Adam was quickly overcome by the tempter and seduced into sin, but the second Adam was proof against all his temptations, and held fast his integrity, till death put a period to a life of the fairest innocence, and of the most extensive usefulness, and advantage to mankind. By the spotless purity of his nature and life he

he paid that debt of obedience, which his people owed, and by his sufferings, commencing at his birth and terminating in his death, he paid their debt of punishment. His sufferings for his people were *voluntary*; for he became obedient to death even the death of the cross; and that they were not *eternal* was owing to the infinite dignity of the sufferer. The punishment due to the sins of his people he endured, in consequence of the *imputation* of them to him. As under the ceremonial dispensation there was a *typical translation* of the guilt of the *literal-Israel* to the victim, in consequence of which it was slain: so there was a *real translation* of the guilt of the *spiritual-Israel* unto the Lamb of God, in consequence of which his blood was shed.

As our Lord was invested with three mediatorial offices by his Father, that of a Prophet, Priest, and King, it was in the character of the Great High-Priest over the house of God, that he died to make atonement for the sins of his people. His priestly office consisted of two parts, to offer himself a sacrifice, and to make intercession. The first part of this office he performed on earth, in his unparalleled sufferings, which terminated in his death, when he offered to God his entire human nature soul and body. His sacrifice was a perfect atonement for the offences of his people, committed against a Being infinite in all perfection, by virtue of the union of his humanity, which was the oblation, to his divinity, the altar that sanctified the gift; for it was by the Eternal Spirit that he offered himself to God. And that his sacrifice was acceptable to the Father, appears from his appointing him to lay down his life, his declaration that he was well pleased for his righteousness sake, his resurrection from the gloomy grave; giving him glory and a kingdom, the promise of a numerous seed, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, after he ascended on high. If the sacrifice, which he offered be considered in the extent of its intrinsic virtue and merit, it is sufficient to save all men, or ten thousand worlds; for merit that is infinite will extend to all possible redemption. But Christ never intended to save to the utmost extent of the merit of his death, he only intended by his death to save the election, or those whom the Father had given unto him. He died to purchase a *certainty* of salvation for

this chosen seed, and not to procure a *possibility* of salvation for all, or to bring all men into a salvable condition.

His intercession, which is the other branch of his priestly office he is now performing within the veil. Having offered his sacrifice on earth, like the legal high-priest, he went into the most holy place, where he appears in the Father's presence, an advocate and intercessor. His intercession is of the same extent with his death. For the elect only he died, and for them only he interceeds. He interceeds for those elected persons already brought into the covenant of grace, that they may be kept in it, and for those elect persons, who are still in their natural condition, that they may be made believers and brought home to their Father's house.

His sacrifice, inclusive of his active obedience, is the foundation of his intercession, or the ground upon which he pleads. And, as he procured all blessings for his people, by his death, so he interceeds, that all those may be conferred upon them; according to their necessities, and in the order, in which the blessings of the covenant are to be communicated. As the great intercessor of the church, he pleads not that the blessings of the covenant may be conferred upon the footing of *mercy*, but upon the footing of *justice*, as due to his merit, and the dear purchase of his blood. His intercession is always, and in all things, prevalent with the Father, and him the Father heareth always, because he loves him with a supreme affection; because he pleads for no persons but those for whom he died, and for no blessings but those which he purchased. And his intercession will continue for ever in heaven, for he hath an unchangeable priesthood, and ever liveth to make intercession. As he interceeds for the church on earth, that it may be glorified: so he will interceed for ever in heaven that it may be preserved in glory, and the rich possession of eternal blessedness. And the eternal happiness of the spotless company about the throne will come into their possession, as the fruit of his meritorious death and prevalent intercession; for the Lamb in the midst of the throne will feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters.

He is also invested, as Mediator, with the office of a prophet, as he is the great Prophet of the church he hath given unto it that whole revelation of the divine will, contained in the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament,

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in which the whole duties of the law of nature are clear as a sun beam, exemplified by his own amiable and heavenly deportment, and the footsteps of many of the flock, who thro' faith and patience are now inheriting the promises. The same celestial oracles contain a great variety of the most important doctrines, absolutely necessary to be known in order to the salvation of sinners, but which would have remained for ever unknown, had they not been revealed by this Interpreter of a thousand, this great prophet, this bright Morning Star, who hath opened the hidden treasures of heaven, and unveiled the gracious purposes of God unto miserable sinners of our race.

But tho' the revelation of divine truth in the Word of God is perfect in itself, yet in the bare letter of it, it is by no means sufficient for the salvation of sinners, otherwise all would be saved, who enjoy the external objective revelation of the gospel. There is indeed light enough in the word, objectively considered, but the sinner, by reason of spiritual blindness, is incapable of beholding the objects and truths of divine revelation, in their own nature, spiritual importance, excellence, and glory, till his understanding is spiritually illumined by Christ, the light of the world, who removes the face-covering of spiritual blindness, and unveils the glories of spiritual objects to the mind, and which, being once seen, in their true light, never fail to have a saving and operative influence on the heart. The order and progress of this spiritual illumination corresponds to the natural course of things. The natural day succeeds the night, which involves the material system in darkness: and the day of saving illumination succeeds the deplorable night of spiritual darkness, which hath fallen upon the souls of men, and involved the spiritual world in impenetrable obscurity, till the Sun of righteousness rise upon the soul with spiritual light and healing in his wings. As the light of the morning shineth more and more unto the perfect day: so the light, which is conveyed from Jesus, the morning star, into the soul, gradually enlightens it, till it arrive at the perfection of knowledge in the immediate vision of God's face.

And Jesus will execute his prophetical office in the heavenly state itself, in all that diversity of glorious objects, which he will present unto the heavenly illumined mind, in all its improvements in knowledge; for the Lamb will
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be the light of the heavenly temple, and shine forth upon the nations of them, that are saved, in the perfection of light and beauty, majesty and glory. ' Their sun will no more go down, nor their moon withdraw itself, but the Lord will be their everlasting light, and their God their glory'.

Our blessed Emmanuel is also invested with the office of a king. As the second person of the adorable Trinity he is God over all blessed forever, equally the Creator and Governor of the universe with the Father and Spirit. But in the economy of grace, as the Redeemer of the church, he is invested with a delegated power and authority by the Father, for carrying into execution his mediatorial administration, till he present all his Redeemed, spotless and faultless before the throne of God. The universal kingdom of providence is committed to him, he is the Governor among the nations, and his kingdom commands every thing that has being. But besides the universal kingdom, subjected to him as mediator, he is by the Father's designation and supreme authority constituted head of the church and lawgiver in Zion. In consequence of being made king in Zion, he alone has the right of *legislation*, in this his own spiritual and independent kingdom. This he claims as his prerogative, and a right inherent in his crown, and his glory in this respect will he not give to another.

There have been two particular church states, which have been established by him, with every thing *pertaining* to them, *viz.* that of the law and gospel church. He was graciously pleased to take the people of Israel, the seed of Jacob his servant and Abraham his friend, into a covenant of peculiarity with himself, and to distinguish them from the rest of mankind, by a peculiar system of government and laws of his appointment. That system of laws, which he gave this favourite, but sinful people, consisted of three parts moral, judicial and ceremonial. He gave them the moral law, as the eternal rule of righteousness, to which they were to study conformity in heart, speech and behaviour. This law results from the infinite rectitude of the divine nature, and is therefore of indispensable and eternal obligation, binding upon all persons, in all places, at all times, and in all conditions. This law all natural men are under, as a covenant of works violated by Adam, and believers are only under it as a rule of holy obedience, in the

the hand of the Mediator, as in the sequel of this treatise will more fully appear.

He gave also to his ancient people a system of judicial statutes for the regulation of their civil government, in that peculiar common wealth. This law is not *obligatory upon Christian states*, any farther than some of its precepts are of a *moral nature*.

The Israelites received the ceremonial law for their direction in the worship of God, and as typical of better things to come.

The office of high-priest commenced in the person of Aaron, and was to be continued in his family; and Levi's tribe were appropriated to the altar, and appointed to conduct the publick services of the sanctuary. Every part of the worship both of the tabernacle and temple, together with the laws of *admission to and exclusion from external fellowship with the church of Israel*, was very particularly adjusted under that dispensation.

The whole ceremonial system was a typical institution and positive ordinance, founded in the *will* and appointment of God, and not in his *nature*, and therefore it was alterable, and abolished at the death of Christ, and was never intended to be obligatory under the Christian dispensation.

The gospel church and kingdom, which succeeded the Jewish establishment, is also framed and set up by Jesus Christ. He hath appointed the office-bearers in the gospel church; how they are to come into their office; their qualifications for it, and the manner, in which they are to discharge it. Of these some were extraordinary necessary for opening the Christian dispensation, and establishing the religion of Jesus in the world; but were not to continue: such were the apostles, prophets, and evangelists. Some were ordinary office-bearers, and their office to be continued in the church to the end of the world: such are pastors and teachers, together with helps and governments, or presbyters, who are to aid the pastors of the church in ruling, tho' not in preaching the word. To those we add deacons, whose business it is to serve tables and manage the secular affairs of the church. The great lawgiver hath also appointed the two seals of the covenant under the gospel, baptism and the sacred supper; the form of government to be observed in the New Testament

ment church, and the *terms of admission to her fellowship, and exulsion from it.* These and every other thing pertaining to this spiritual community, he hath adjusted by his *own express authority*, and not left them to be new-modelled, or changed according to the arbitrary humours of men.

The power and authority of the office-bearers of the church is in subordination to the authority of the great head, and consists in carrying into execution the laws and ordinances, which he hath appointed, till he come again; but they have no power to add to his doctrines, ordinances, and laws, to take from them, or to alter them. Whatever they have received from the head, they are to hold fast till he come, and to teach and observe with fidelity and care whatsoever he hath commanded them. And as far as they do otherwise, in their doctrine or judicative capacity, they are not the servants of Christ, nor subject to his authority, as the only lawgiver in Zion.

It is also the peculiar prerogative of this glorious king of the church to form the heart to the obedience of his own laws, he engraves his law upon the hearts of his subjects. Other kings may prescribe laws to their subjects, and command the obedience of the outward man, while their power cannot reach the heart; but the Prince of life reigns in the hearts of his subjects, and makes them a willing people in the day of his power. And when by the gospel, the rod of his strength, all the election are made the willing subjects of his government, and all those added to the church, that are to be saved, and the whole mystical body compleated, he will give a most glorious display of his kingly power in the great day of final doom and decision, in the righteous judgement of the world; 'for the Father hath committed all judgement to the Son,' and will at last judge the world in righteousness by him.

Having now spoken of Christ's mediatorial offices, it may not be improper to enumerate a few of the blessings of his purchase, which the whole spiritual Israel are made to possess in due time.

The glorious gospel is the great and chief mean, which God the Spirit makes use of in bringing the elect into a state of salvation by Jesus Christ. No qualifications are required of sinners to *entitle* them to the gospel salvation, or to be the foundation of their right to believe in the Son of

of God. The calls, commands, and invitations of the word, are the ground of faith, and they are directed to mankind, as lost and perishing sinners of Adam's family. As every Israelite had a right to eat of the paschal lamb; to gather the manna in the wilderness; and if bit by the fiery serpents to look to the brazen serpent for healing: so every sinner, whatever he has been, and whatever he has done, has a right to believe in Christ, as the great ordinance of heaven for his salvation, and ought to consider the calls and invitations of the gospel so *particularly* directed to himself, as tho' they were not directed to any other person in the creation. It is the distinguished excellence and glory of the gospel, that it offers Jesus and his salvation, *fully and freely* to every sinner, who hears this joyful sound.

But tho' no qualifications are required as the foundation of faith, but only the gracious declarations of the word, yet a sense and conviction of sin and misery is necessary in all those, who believe. It is not necessary, as the ground of faith, but it is necessary to faith itself. For it must be observed, that a right to believe, and faith itself, are very different things. The one lies wholly in the *word*, the other is seated in the *heart*. Many have a right to believe in the external invitation, but few in comparison improve this right into real faith. And even many convinced sinners perish without believing in Christ, as many of the Israelites who passed by the burning mount, died in the wilderness, and never entered the promised land. And of those, whose convictions are of a saving nature, some have stronger convictions, some weaker, some are under them a longer, some a shorter time. Sometimes convinced sinners are long in the place of the breaking forth of children; at other times, as soon as Zion is in travail, she brings forth her sons, and a nation is born in one day: so diversified is the way of the Spirit in this mysterious and divine process.

But sooner or later, when convictions are saving, they issue in regeneration, which consists in an effectual supernatural change of the faculties of the soul. This gracious change is produced by the agency of the Spirit of Christ, and sinners are wholly passive, when it is effected. They may indeed be active in the use of appointed means, that
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they may obtain conversion, but the infusion of the heavenly nature in regeneration is wholly the work of the Spirit. They can no more produce the heavenly life in their souls, by any actions of their own, or improvement of their natural powers, than they could be the authors of their own creation, or than a man under the power of natural death, the prey of worms and corruption, can raise himself from the darksome grave, and perform the functions of natural life. When this change is effected the soul does not receive any *new* natural faculties; for its faculties are essential to its nature, and tho' weakened, were not lost by sin. The soul is possessed of the same understanding, will and affections, in every state of its being, as constituent parts of its nature. But in regeneration the old, natural, and essential faculties of the soul are renewed by the infusion and reception of new spiritual qualities. This change is also *universal* in the soul, and pervades all its faculties, and yet the whole soul is not renewed. In regeneration grace is perfect in its *parts* but is not perfect in its *growth*. As when a child is born into the natural world, he has all the members of a man, tho' these are but small at first, in comparison of what they will be in a state of manhood: so when the new creature is formed in the soul, it contains every grace really, in the seed and principle, tho' no grace is perfect in its degree.

Justification is another privilege of believers. Tho' *distinct* in its nature from regeneration it is *inseparably* connected with it. Justification is a change of the sinners *state*, regeneration is a change of his *heart*. The one is an act of God without him, the other is the *work* of God within him. The one respects the *penalty* of the law and the *punishment*, which it threatens, the other respects the *precepts* of the law, and the *obedience*, which it requires. In the one the believer is delivered from the *guilt* of sin, in the other from its *power*. In the one he has a *title* to heaven, and in the other a begun *meetness* for it.

The foundation of justification is the meritorious righteousness of the divine surety, exclusive of all qualifications in the person justified, or any works performed by him. The faith, by which he is justified, is of the operation of God, and it neither justifies, by virtue of its *habit* or existence

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ence in the soul, as a grace of the Spirit, nor yet by its own *act*, as it is exercised by the soul, but it justifies as an instrument or hand of the soul which it stretches forth to receive the gift of Christ's righteousness, exhibited as the object of justifying faith, in the word of grace, and claims an interest in it as its own. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the sinner by God, at the time when it is received by faith. And when it is imputed to him, it is not infused into his nature, but in law-reckoning, it is so placed to his account that it is as pleadable by him for acceptance with God and eternal life, as if it had been wrought out by him in his own person.

In justification the believer not only obtains a title to life, which he cannot lose again, but also a full, free, and irreversibile pardon of all his sins. When he is justified, he is compleatly freed from the law, as a covenant of works, both in its *precept and penalty*. He is freed from the precept of the law, as a covenant, because in the covenant of works the law's precept was prescribed to Adam as the foundation of a title to life, but it is not prescribed to the believer for this end in the gospel. But tho' the believer is freed from the precept of the law, in its federal form, as obedience to it is the foundation of a title to life, according to the nature and constitution of the covenant of works, yet he is not freed from its obligation, as it is the eternal rule of righteousness, resulting immediately from the all-perfect nature of the divine law-giver; for in this sense the law must have been the rule of obedience to man, tho' it had never been delivered to him in the form of a covenant, and in this sense the law is unalterable in its obligation, till the nature of the law-giver be changed, and man cease to be a subject of moral government. This natural law is taken into the gospel system, and is in the hand of Christ as Mediator, and it is obligatory on all his mystical members, not as in the old covenant that they may obtain a *title* to life by obeying it, but as the *rule* of their obedience: which obedience is at once the *evidence* of their title to life by faith in the Saviour's righteousness, and their *meetness* for the possession of eternal life, in respect of the frame and temper of their mind; for without holiness, in this sense, no man can see the Lord,

In justification the believer is also freed from the law's penalty, or which is the same thing, he obtains the remission of sin and is exempted for ever from the punishment, and vindictive wrath it deserves. There hath been a controversy keenly agitated among divines, about the pardon of sin obtained in justification. Some maintain that in justification all sins are pardoned, past, present, and to come. Others assert that in justification only past and present sins are pardoned, and a foundation is laid for the remission of future sins, upon renewed repentance and application to the blood of atonement. This controversy, like many others, has been very fruitless, and consists rather in words than things. The doctrine of scripture concerning the pardon of sin seems to be as follows. In justification a complete and irrevocable pardon, of all sin already committed, is obtained. And the justified believer being now happily delivered out of his old covenant state, and interested in the new covenant, and its glorious head, such is the nature and contexture of the new covenant, within the bond of which he is brought, that no sins, which he afterwards commits, ever expose him to condemnation; for there is no condemnation to them, that are in Christ Jesus, there is none in time, there will be none at death, none at the great day of final *retribution*, none to all *eternity*. Not that the believer's sins less deserve punishment, in their own nature, than his sins, while an unbeliever, on the contrary, they have more intrinsic demerit in them than the sins of his former state, as they are committed against greater degrees of light, love, and mercy manifested to him, and greater internal ability to resist temptation. But the nature of the constitution, under which he now is, *preserves* him for ever free from the law of works, so that he can never be subjected either to the commanding or condemning power of that covenant. But tho' the believer cannot sin against the law of works, and therefore cannot be condemned by that law to eternal punishment, yet times innumerable, in thought, word, and deed, he sins against the law, as the *rule* of his obedience. And tho' the sins, which he commits, in his new state, against the law in the hand of the Mediator, do not expose him to vindictive punishment, yet they expose him to the chastisements and corrections of God, as a Father, who loves his children in his heart,

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tho' he may have the rod in his hand. And however the wicked may sometimes pass with impunity, in the present life, as their time of punishment is approaching, yet if God's dear children offend, they will certainly meet with correction and the discipline of the cross; for tho' in mercy he will save their souls, he will take vengeance on their inventions. And it is the duty of his children to pray for the pardon of their sins, dally committed against the divine law, as the *rule* of their obedience; and also that they may obtain the *sense* of the primary pardon of sin in the day of believing.

As believers are justified by the righteousness and regenerated by the spirit of Christ, so by him they obtain the inestimable privilege of adoption into the divine family.

There is a twofold adoption mentioned in scripture, there is a general adoption into a visible church state, when men are brought externally into covenant with God, as were first the Jews, and afterwards the Gentiles. But many, who are the sons of God in this respect, are his enemies, and will at last be found among the workers of iniquity.

But the privilege of adoption, of which I now speak, is peculiar to believers, adoption in the proper notion of it consists in taking a person into a family, and making him an heir, tho' he is not so by his birth. It is so with the adopted sons of God. Tho' by nature the children of the devil, and heirs of hell, by adoption they become the children of God and the heirs of glory. Men usually adopt into their families those, who possess some amiable qualities in their estimation, or because they have no children of their own, but those, who by adoption are admitted into the heavenly family, are destitute of every amiable and desirable qualification. Nor does the great Father of all stand in need of adopting any such into his family for want of children; for besides his own Son, in whom he is infinitely well pleased, he has millions of holy angels, his sons by creation, who never offended him.

By being the adopted sons of God, believers have a title to all the privileges of his children. They possess the Spirit of adoption, as inseparably connected with their sonship, whereby they call God their Father, and worship and serve him with the affections and dispositions of sons.

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They are intitled to protection; provision; correction, to grace and glory, all things are their's, because they are Christ's, and by him the adopted sons of God.

And as they are renewed; justified; and adopted, so they are sanctified, and are in scripture called the sanctified in Christ Jesus. The foundation of their sanctification is laid in their regeneration by the Spirit. Justification is an *act* of God, because it is *perfect* in the first moment of believing. sanctification is a *work* of God, because it is only *gradually* brought to perfection. In the new birth the new nature exists in all the faculties of the soul, but it is not perfected in any of them. There is light in the understanding, love in the will, and order in the affections; but darkness, enmity, and disorder still remain, in some degree, in all those powers of the mind, till the body of clay be dissolved. Sanctification is the same work begun in conversion, carried on to perfection, till the holy nature have perfectly diffused itself thro' all the powers of the soul; and the remainders of the body of death are entirely extinguished. The continued assistance of the spirit is as necessary to carry on this work as to begin it, and the believer is as dependent on God for renewed ability to exercise the grace he has received, as for the implantation of grace at first; or for the support and exercise of his natural faculties and members. Tho' sanctification is not the ground of the believer's title to heaven, but Immanuel's righteousness, yet it answers many excellent and invaluable proposes. It illustrates the glorious energy and power of divine grace. God is glorified, when his children bring forth much fruit. The Redeemer is satisfied when he sees this fruit of the travail of his soul, upon the hearts of men. The Spirit is glorified and pleased with the success of his applying work, in reducing the rebellious to the obedience of faith. It is profitable to the world, as a visible representation of the amiableness and beauty of real religion, and a practical testimony and remonstrance against sin. It is profitable to the Christian himself, as it is a source of much inward pleasure, satisfaction, and joy; as it is the best evidence of his justification, and as it qualifies him in respect of the frame and temper of his mind, for the immediate vision of God's face. For there must always be a correspondence and agreement between the faculties and powers of enjoyment, and the objects

objects to be enjoyed before they can afford real satisfaction and delight. Tho' the polluted and impure were not excluded from heaven, by the express declaration and appointment of God, the depravity of their own hearts would entirely disqualify them for the exercises and enjoyments of the celestial state. A sow would not be more out of its proper element in a royal palace, or a fish on the dry land, than a polluted sinner in this blissful habitation wherein dwelleth righteousness. But by the sanctification of the spirit, the Christian is brought into a proper frame and appetite for the objects, employments, and satisfactions of the better country. And his *perseverance* in a state of grace and holiness, till he come thither, is secured by the divine decree, the constitution of the new covenant, the merits of Christ, the the work of the Spirit, and the power, faithfulness, and love of God.

Death also is the Christians. Tho' he is not exempted from its *stroke*, he is delivered from its *sling*. Death, which puts a final period to the carnal, tumultuous, and insipid joys of the wicked, and dismisses their souls to the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, is to the sincere disciple of Jesus a period to all the labours and distresses of this mortal life, and a blessed introduction to that fulness of joy, which is at God's right hand. Like the fiery chariot, in which the holy *Tisbbit* ascended, death transports the gracious soul to the excellent glory. It is true that when the soul of the believer is separated from its kindred clay, his body must descend into the grave and see corruption, but there it sleeps, as in a peaceful habitation, and quiet resting place, free from all the troubles, storms, and tumults of life. And tho' it mingle with its original dust and see corruption, still it is precious in the Redeemer's sight, and a part of his mystical body. And being so nearly related to him, and a part of himself, tho' it be forgotten in the land of the living, it will not be forgotten by him, nor cease to be the object of his tender care. When the great rising day is come, he will reanimate the dead bodies of his saints with their former souls, and raise them from the dust of the earth, much fairer, more improved, and glorious forms than those wasted, disfigured, and corruptible frames, which death lodged in the gloomy repositories of the grave. At this wished for period, death and
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the grave will be swallowed up in victory, with respect to the whole mystical body of Christ. The resurrection bodies of the just will be composed of the same material substance with their present bodies, but strangely improved by the addition of new spiritual qualities, that they may be capable to bear the visions of glory, and to be meet companions to their souls, in the joys and exercises of a blessed eternity. The bodies of the righteous will be raised up from the grave in *union* to their mystical head, by his spirit, who dwelleth in them; but those of the wicked will be quickened by the power of Christ as a *judge*. The saints will ascend in their whole persons to meet the Lord in the air, and when they are brought before his venerable tribunal, the glorious Judge will with infinite delight, and satisfaction, and to their unspeakable joy pronounce the irreversible sentence, adjudging them to eternal life. They will also acquiesce in that doleful sentence, which the righteous Judge will pronounce against apostate angels, and reprobate men, appointing them to endless misery, in proportion to the demerit of their crimes.

And after the solemn process of that day is ended the glorious Judge of all will return to his Father's kingdom, at the head of myriads of attending angels, and the whole church of the redeemed, and introduce them with gladness great, and mirth on every side, into his Father's presence, where their knowledge and holiness, happiness and glory, shall be perfect, and continue thro' the unmeasurable extent of unceasing duration.

This I have laid together in a connected series a number of the capital truths of divine revelation, without attempting to prove them from the sacred oracles, that they might be brought within a more narrow compass. Those, who are acquainted with the holy scriptures, and the harmony and analogy of divine truth, will be able to judge whether the sentiments contained in this small treatise, have a foundation in the word of inspiration, and are agreeable to the doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. The truths, selected from scripture in this short running narration, are the truths inculcated by the relief ministers, upon the people of their pastoral charge, the saving influence and energy whereof they desire they and their hearers may experience upon their hearts, and then they

they doubt not but they will be saved themselves and they who hear them.

And now let the candid world judge whether those professed witnesses for truth are not as *forward as wise*, who injuriously charge the Relief-ministers with *deluding* the generation, and *relieving* them from the yoke of Christ. If to preach the above mentioned system of divine truths is to relieve the generation from the Redeemer's yoke, what sort of truths do these men themselves preach to bring them under it?

P. S. An anonymous scribbler has very lately appeared against the Relief. He boasts great things, and among many other great swelling words of *vanity and falsehood* against the Relief ministers, he says, 'that, he is not certain but the Relief scheme, in general, is the growth of modern scepticism and infidelity?' After the summary of Christian doctrines now given, which the synod of Relief believe and teach in their sacred ministrations, it is submitted to every candid and unprejudiced reader if they are either Deists themselves, or wish to encourage the cause of Deism, which is a professed disbelief of divine revelation altogether, and whether this defamatory scribbler does not more resemble the *accuser* of the brethren than a *minister* of the New Testament, who is bound to speak the truth in love. But as I intend to give the reader a more perfect portrait of the character and spirit of this author in the conclusion of this performance, I shall say no more of him here.

PART II.

Containing an account of the points, in which the Synod of Relief differ from the present National Establishment.

HAVING now mentioned a variety of scriptural truths and doctrines, that the reader may have a view of the Religious System maintained by the Synod of Relief, I next proceed to state the precise points, in which they differ from the Established Church, on the one hand, and the Secession, on the other. I shall begin with the points, in which they differ from the Established Church of Scotland.

In the entry I observe with pleasure that there are many *valuable and respectable ministers of the gospel*, on the National Establishment, who glory in preaching the salvation of the cross, desire to serve God with their spirits in the gospel of his Son, and whose zeal for evangelical truth, purity of deportment, and the *liberties and rights* of Christians greatly *endears* them to the Relief ministers, who love and honour them much in the Lord, and did the despotism of the times permit, would be happy to join in occasional ministerial communion with them, and to go into the house of God and enjoy sweet fellowship with them in the ordinances of the gospel worship. But they lament that ministers of this character are now by much the smallest number of those, who compose the ministerial order, in the National Establishment.

There are other two sorts of ministers in the National Church, with whom the Relief body cannot join in communion ministerial or Christian, first legal and unsound preachers, secondly those, who have intruded themselves into the office of the holy ministry, not only without the consent of the Christian people, but in direct opposition to their inclination and choice.

It has been a long and frequent complaint, amongst the most serious and best disposed people in the nation, that many ministers in the establishment either deny or pervert the doctrines of the gospel, or conceal and withdraw the great operative truths of the Christian System from the view of the people. It is scarcely possible to account for the numerous and constant complaints of this nature, from every corner of the land, if there be no occasion given for them. A faithful minister of the gospel, who makes conscience of declaring the whole counsel of God to perishing sinners, will not indeed satisfy himself with explaining in his public ministrations the *doctrinal* part of religion; but will also illustrate and inculcate the *preceptive* and *practical* branches of it. The great capital and essential doctrines of the imputation of Adam's sin; the universal depravity of mankind; justification by the righteousness of Christ; regeneration by the Spirit; and the necessity of divine influences for the performance of duty, the scribe who is well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom, will lay as the foundation, and on it rear the beautiful superstructure of evangelical holiness, and explain the several branches of practical and experimental religion. On *doctrinal* subjects he will be *practical* and on *practical* subjects he will be *doctrinal*. And when preaching on any of the preceptive branches of religion, he will so far show the connection between privilege and duty, grace and holiness as will bring no impeachment upon his character as a legal preacher, or administer to his audience any occasion to suspect his soundness in the faith. But if any, who bear the ministerial character presume to deny the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity; the corruption of human nature, the necessity of justification by the imputation of Immanuel's righteousness; or regeneration by divine influences; if they maintain man's ability to obey the law in his own strength, or make his duties of obedience either in whole or in part the ground of his acceptance with God and a title to eternal life, such are *legal preachers* and can with no *propriety* be called preachers of the gospel.

And those to whom this character belongs in the National church are the more inexcusable, that at their ordination to the Holy ministry, they come under very solemn obligations to maintain and support that system of sound doctrine



doctrine contained in the celebrated Westminster Confession, and yet after all *subvert* in the course of their ministry their own *professed belief*. Such a practice, tho' alas! too prevalent, argues the basest dissingenuity and depravity of heart, and is a mournful symptom of their future usefulness. If they cannot see the Calvinistic system of doctrines laid down in the confession to be agreeable to the word of God, they ought never for the most lucrative settlement, to profess to believe it, and then tho' they were in an error, they would be consistent with themselves and might be honest men. But solemnly to profess to believe, what in fact they do not believe, and afterwards to subvert their professed creed, is totally incompatible with uprightness and integrity.

And as the Relief Synod are fully convinced that such a legal strain of preaching is subversive of the gospel, and will never be blessed of God to promote the true knowledge and interest of religion, they think it exceedingly sinful to maintain communion ministerial or Christian with any such. And it is their prayer, that God in mercy may enlighten the minds of those men in the knowledge of the truth, and dispose them faithfully to declare it to others, or that he may send other labourers into his vineyard, who will instruct his church in the knowledge of the pure and unadulterated truths of the gospel. *Legal preaching* therefore is one of the principle points in which the Synod of Relief differ from the present prevailing party in the church of Scotland.

The other point in which they differ from the National Church is the *intruding* of men into the office of the holy ministry without the *call* of the Christian people and in direct opposition to their inclination and choice. Of this there have been many mournful instances, in the various parts of the kingdom for a series of past years, of which, the public decisions of the National Assembly; the numerous places of worship erected by Dissenters; and many almost *empty* parochial churches, are visible and glaring proofs. This sinful and *Antichristian* practice has greatly marred the peace of the National Church; destroyed her credit and usefulness; grieved the hearts of her best disposed ministers and members; and occasioned many wasting emigrations from her society. I add, it has been one
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of the great *causes* of the increase of legal preachers. As the generality of those who occupy the higher stations in life, are unhappily destitute of a *relish* for religion and sound doctrine, and the settlement of churches being principally to be obtained by their interest independent of the people, young men pointing towards the ministry, will generally (a few excepted of the more conscientious) endeavour to acquire those talents, and pursue that strain of preaching which will render them *agreeable* to those of higher rank, rather than those accomplishments which would render them most *useful* in the church of God. When a decent and proper regard was paid to the inclinations of the Christian people in the settlement of ministers, and the *Antichristian monster patronage* had not erected its deformed crest so visibly as at present, the clerical order in the church of Scotland was generally composed of learned, orthodox and laborious ministers. In almost every parochial church was to be seen a serious, respectable, and attentive audience, and harmony and peace, edification and love reigned through the nation. And candidates for the sacred office studied to cultivate those talents, which were calculated to promote the ends of usefulness and edification in the church of God. But since the rigorous exercise of patronage took place, error and discord, confusion and anarchy, and a thousand other evils have been its attendants.

None have a *right* to exercise any office in the church of God without a call to it. The great Head of the church was himself called of God as was Aaron. The call of the ministers of the New Testament is extraordinary, or ordinary, of the first kind was the call given to the apostles, whom Christ himself called from their secular employments and qualified with extraordinary powers for discharging that high office to which he called them. The ordinary call belongs to the ordinary standing pastors of the church, to the end of the world. A call to the office of the ministry in general consists in a competent measure of gifts and endowments for explaining the system of divine truths unto the church, and a disposition of heart to serve God in the gospel of his Son. And sometimes God shuts up men as it were for the ministry by the conduct of his providence, disappointing them in other views and pursuits and so
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ordering particular circumstances in their lot, as to lead them forward to the ministry, by the visible footsteps of his providence. And when these intimations of providence concur with sufficient endowments, and inclination to the ministerial work, a person's call to the sacred function is the more clear and satisfying, and it is his duty not to oppose but to render a chearful submission to such intimations of the divine will.

But tho' the things above-mentioned, may concur in a call to the work of the ministry in general, yet to the lawful exercise and discharge of the ministerial function in any particular and fixed station, the call, consent, and approbation of those who are to be under that ministry in the Lord, is indispensibly necessary. And every minister, who would wish to be wise to *salvation* for himself, and *useful* in the church of God, ought to take special care, not to enter on the ministerial work, in any corner of the vineyard, without the *consent and approbation of the flock*, when they are otherwise willing to chuse a pastor for themselves.

That Christian congregations have a right to chuse their own ministers is evident from the light of nature, the word of truth, and the practice of the primitive church. It is evident from the light of nature: right reason declares, that as the soul is more precious than the body, its interests and concerns are much more valuable and important, than those of the body, and ought to be attended to with proportionably greater care. There is not any more evident dictate of the law of nature, than this; and, when applied to our present purpose, it shows, what a sacred right Christians have to chuse their own pastors, and how extremely careful they should be, to make a prudent and judicious choice of those who are to be intrusted with the charge and inspection of their most important interests.

If one, in the condition of a servant, is at *liberty* to chuse his master: if one, having a suit at law, is at *liberty* to chuse his counsel; if one, affected with a distemper, is at *liberty* to chuse his physician, is it not highly reasonable in itself, that men have the *liberty* of chusing those who are to watch for their souls? if, in the affairs of *this life*, they are at liberty to chuse what persons they think proper,

proper, for the management of them, is it not strange and unreasonable, to deny them the same privilege in matters of *everlasting concern*? But it is objected, that they may abuse their liberty. It may be so; but is this a good reason for taking it from them? The British subjects may abuse their civil liberty; but would this justify the British parliament in depriving them of it? A man may eat improper food; but should his liberty of chusing what food is most agreeable to his taste and constitution, be taken away on that account? A sick man may employ an unskilful phyfician, who may greatly endanger his constitution, by a wrong prescription; but would it be reasonable, on this account, to deny him the privilege of chusing his own phyfician? Equally unreasonable is it, to deny Christians the liberty of chusing their own ministers, which is so clearly founded in the *light* of nature itself, because in particular cases, they may make an improper choice.

As this right is agreeable to sound reason, and has its foundation in it, so it is confirmed and exemplified in the New Testament; The word of revelation never abolishes, but establishes the rights and privileges of nature. When one was to be *chosen* to the office of apostleship, to supply the place of Judas, we find, that the people were consulted, and their inclination and approbation was both desired and expressed, as appears from Acts i. 15, and 23. compared, ‘And in those days, Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, the number of the names together, were about an hundred and twenty; and they appointed two:’ that is, the hundred and twenty did so. Now, if the apostles, who were men divinely inspired, did not chuse to fill up the vacancy in their own number, by their own authority, without consulting the inclination of the people, what right have any, who have neither apostolic authority, nor inspiration, to *force* ministers upon reclaiming congregations? Surely, they who do so, must be governed by a spirit, very different from that which animated the holy apostles of the Lamb.

In like manner, when it was found necessary to appoint deacons in the Christian church, the apostles did not take the power of *electing* them, into their own hands, but submitted their *election* to the people, as we read, Acts viii.

vi. from the beginning; and, chapter xiv. of the same book, we read, verse 23d; that Peter and Barnabas ordained elders in the churches of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. It is not to be doubted, that the elders ordained in those churches, were both teaching and ruling presbyters: And the verb which, in our translation, is rendered 'They ordained,' in the original, properly signifies, 'They ordained by the stretching out of hands;' that is, the people having *chosen* these men by the *stretching out of their hands*, they were, in consequence of this election, ordained by Paul and Barnabas. These several nominations, or elections of the Christian people, show us clearly, who had the *right* of electing the office-bearers of the church in the *apostolic age*, and what was the conduct of the churches planted by these venerable men, when the church of Christ stood upon its own foundation, and was not *kneaded* with the worldly kingdoms, which heterogeneous mixture hath often since marred the beauty and glory of her original simplicity, the spirituality of her form and constitution, and dressed her in the gaudy attire of an harlot.

Now, the example of the church of Christ in electing her own office-bearers, recorded in the New Testament, is left for the instruction and imitation of the Christian church, in all succeeding ages; and scripture example is as *obligatory*, as precept; yea, the apostles themselves observed and established this order in the churches, who were men divinely inspired, and under the immediate direction of the Spirit of truth, in the constitution of the first Christian churches, and the order established in them.

It is evident, also, from the history of the primitive church, that, during the three first centuries, the Christian people had the *liberty of choosing* their own pastors, and it was not till the fourth century, that it began to be otherwise, when, as a compensation to those who built and endowed churches for divine worship, the power of nominating and electing the persons who were to officiate in them, was *unwarily* lodged in their hands. This was the fatal origin of *patronage*, which hath been long the scourge and trial of the Christian church, and is eminently so of the church of Scotland, in our own times. Thus it appears; from the light of nature, from the word of revela-

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As this right is agreeable to sound reason, and has its foundation in it, so it is confirmed and exemplified in the New Testament; The word of revelation never abolishes, but establishes the rights and privileges of nature. When one was to be *chosen* to the office of apostleship, to supply the place of Judas, we find, that the people were consulted, and their inclination and approbation was both desired and expressed, as appears from Acts i. 15, and 23. compared, ‘ And in those days, Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, the number of the names together, were about an hundred and twenty; and they appointed two:’ that is, the hundred and twenty did so. Now, if the apostles, who were men divinely inspired, did not chuse to fill up the vacancy in their own number, by their own authority, without consulting the inclination of the people, what right have any, who have neither apostolic authority, nor inspiration, to *force* ministers upon reclaiming congregations? Surely, they who do so, must be governed by a spirit, very different from that which animated the holy apostles of the Lamb.

In like manner, when it was found necessary to appoint deacons in the Christian church, the apostles did not take the power of *electing* them, into their own hands, but submitted their *election* to the people, as we read, Acts

vi. from the beginning; and, chapter xiv. of the same book, we read, verse 23d, that Peter and Barnabas ordained elders in the churches of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. It is not to be doubted, that the elders ordained in those churches, were both teaching and ruling presbyters: And the verb which, in our translation, is rendered 'They ordained,' in the original, properly signifies, 'They ordained by the stretching out of hands;' that is, the people having *chosen* these men by the *stretching out of their hands*, they were, in consequence of this election, ordained by Paul and Barnabas. These several nominations, or elections of the Christian people, show us clearly, who had the *right* of electing the office-bearers of the church in the *apostolic age*, and what was the conduct of the churches planted by these venerable men, when the church of Christ stood upon its own foundation, and was not *kneaded* with the worldly kingdoms, which heterogeneous mixture hath often since marred the beauty and glory of her original simplicity, the spirituality of her form and constitution, and dressed her in the gaudy attire of an harlot.

Now, the example of the church of Christ in electing her own office-bearers, recorded in the New Testament, is left for the instruction and imitation of the Christian church, in all succeeding ages; and scripture example is as *obligatory*, as precept; yea, the apostles themselves observed and established this order in the churches, who were men divinely inspired, and under the immediate direction of the Spirit of truth, in the constitution of the first Christian churches, and the order established in them.

It is evident, also, from the history of the primitive church, that, during the three first centuries, the Christian people had the *liberty of choosing* their own pastors, and it was not till the fourth century, that it began to be otherwise, when, as a compensation to those who built and endowed churches for divine worship, the power of nominating and electing the persons who were to officiate in them, was *unwarily* lodged in their hands. This was the fatal origin of *patronage*, which hath been long the scourge and trial of the Christian church, and is eminently so of the church of Scotland, in our own times. Thus it appears, from the light of nature, from the word of revelation;

tion, and from the practice and example of the primitive church, that Christian congregations have the right of chusing their own pastors: And if this right is agreeable to reason, scripture, and the example of the church in her best times, ought not Christians to *stand fast* in this liberty, wherewith they are made free, and never to suffer such a precious privilege to be *torn* from them?

The Synod are determined, by grace, to support this ancient and well founded right of the Christian people to chuse their ministers. *One principal object* which they have in view, is, to relieve *oppressed* congregations in Scotland from *intruders*, and that they may have religious ordinances dispensed among them, by ministers of their own approbation and choice; and they are doing the greatest service to the church of Scotland, as they keep the people under their inspection, in the belief of her doctrines, as contained in her Confession and Catechisms, and in readiness to fall back into her bosom, when her ministers shall be found preaching the pure and uncorrupted doctrines of the gospel, and asserting the liberties of Christians.—May the Lord hasten it in his time!

And I have no doubt, that it is the cordial wish of my reverend brethren, that those unhappy men, who have been left of God to intrude themselves into reclaiming congregations, and thereby have given just offence to God and his church, divided his heritage, and destroyed their own usefulness, may obtain mercy, and be brought to sincere repentance; that tho' they have scattered the Redeemer's flock instead of gathering them, brought a reproach on religion, and made the hearts of the righteous sad, they may at last be found in the number of the godly, and have their lot among the saints.

P A R T



PART III.

Containing an Account of the Points, in which the Synod of Relief differ from the Seceders.

HAVING now mentioned the principal things in which the Synod differ from the national church, I next proceed to consider the things in which they differ from the Secession in Scotland.

The same arbitrary and despotic measures of the national church, gave birth both to the Secession and the Relief-interest. When the Secession first took place in Scotland, it stood much upon the same footing as the Relief does at present, with respect to communion with the established church. For some time, the first Seceders declared their willingness to hold communion with those ministers and Christians in the national church, who were opposing her defections and tyrannical measures. In a short time, however, they stated a *total* separation, both from the communion, and judicatories of the church. Two reasons I have heard assigned for this conduct:—One is, That the church, instead of reforming, was growing more and more degenerate, and therefore, they thought it proper to separate from her altogether; the other is, that this total separation, was a *political measure* in the first seceding ministers, to secure a following and party to themselves, as they had some reason to be apprehensive, that many who had left their own worthy and respectable ministers on the establishment, might, after the first fervour of their zeal was abated, return to their former pastors, and thereby the adherents of the Secession be greatly diminished. Both these reasons have been assigned; it is enough for me to mention them, leaving others to judge, which of them is the true one.

The ground of difference between the two parties of
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Seceders, I shall not much inquire into: It was too inconsiderable to justify the separation that followed upon it; and if both parties had been more under the direction of heavenly wisdom, peace, and love, and less under the direction of the pride, bitterness, and uncharitableness of their own spirits, their unity might still have remained, and the excommunication of the burgher ministers been prevented, which, being inflicted for a matter of such *doubtful disputation*, was certainly a wanton and profane prostitution of the highest and most solemn censure of the church. It is, however, easily accounted for, by what Doctor Young calls 'The curs'd ungodliness of zeal.' The Seceders differed only about the meaning of the burgher oath, while they were agreed in other things. The Burghers maintained it to be a lawful oath, because they viewed it as a swearing to the true religion. The Anti-burghers maintained it to be sinful, because they viewed it as homologating the errors and defections of the present national church; but they would have found no fault with it, had they thought that it implied no more than a swearing to the true religion. But I have an objection to the lawfulness of the burgher oath, tho' it were only a swearing to the true religion, and tho' both parties of Seceders were agreed in this sense of it. The objection is, that it blends the kingdom of Christ with the worldly kingdom, as it suspends a liberty to trade in the civil community, upon a religious condition. Viewing the oath in this light, I consider it as a vile encroachment upon the civil and natural rights of men, and too similar in its complection to what is said of Antichrist, Rev. xiii. 16, 17. 'And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.' As, therefore, this oath confounds the religion of the Son of God with the civil rights of mankind, and does not preserve the distinction between religion and the state, it is sinful: But none of the parties of Seceders can maintain its sinfulness in this sense, because it is entirely of a piece with their own principles, which evidently blend the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of this world.



It hath been the peculiar unhappiness of these men, to build their scheme, or to sit down (as they call it) upon certain civil establishments of religion; and hence their unedifying controversies about the perfections of the second Reformation period, compared with the Revolution settlement, and about acts of church and state, at these periods. Christianity is sometimes more, and sometimes less favoured by the worldly kingdoms: This hath hitherto been the fate of this most excellent institution; and, in all probability, will be, in the generations to come. But it should never be forgotten, that the Christian religion must stand upon its own foundation, and is to be received by all nations, not because it has the sanction and establishment of the *civil legislature*, but on account of its own divine authority, internal excellence, and the inestimable spiritual and eternal blessings which it brings along with it. It is on these, and such like accounts, that it demands attention, and claims to be received by the children of men, and not because it either hath the countenance of the civil state, or wants it. And had this been properly attended to by the Seceders, the world would never have been troubled with so many foolish controversies about acts of assemblies, and acts of parliament at different periods, and ashamed to sit down and build their scheme upon any *civil establishment of religion in Britain*, they would have built immediately upon the *better foundation of the apostles and prophets*. When I read the writings and controversies of the Seceders about acts of assemblies and parliaments, and state-settlements of religion, on which they build, and to which they pay such a superstitious regard, the only useful instruction I have received from them, is, that they have given me a humbling view of the ignorance and folly of mankind, and of the baleful influence which carnal and perverted notions of the nature of Messiah's kingdom have upon the minds of men.

But however much the Seceders have differed from one another in their controversies about the burgher oath, which have been so unedifying to mankind, and so fatal to themselves, their peculiar scheme of principles is, at bottom, the same, and therefore the points in which the

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Relief Synod differ from them, hold equally with respect to both parties of Seceders.

But before I state the points of difference, I think it proper to mention some things which constitute no part of the *peculiar scheme* of Seceders, but are common to them with others, that their scheme may not monopolize what is not peculiar to it.

1. The system of grace, or the capital and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, are no part of their peculiar scheme. There are many ministers on the establishment, who make these the great theme of their public ministrations in the church of God. And the same system of evangelical doctrines, is preached by every minister of Relief, as the reader will perceive by perusing the first part of this pamphlet.

2. To maintain the form of Presbyterian church government to be agreeable to the word of God, and the form of government appointed therein for the New Testament church, is no *peculiar part* of the Secession scheme; for all the Relief ministers do the same, and others of different denominations.

3. To believe the Westminster confession of faith is no peculiar part of the Secession scheme, for all the Relief ministers at their ordination, solemnly acknowledge the same as the confession of their faith.

4. To maintain that Christian congregations have a right to chuse their own ministers, is no part of the peculiar scheme of Seceders; for every Relief minister maintains the same, and from the heart detests the *abominable and antichristian practice*, of intruding ministers into reluctant congregations, which now so unhappily takes place in this nation, to the scattering of the Redeemer's flock, ruining the invaluable interest of religion, and the defeating of the great end of the gospel ministry, *viz.* the edification of the body of Christ, and not the gratification of an imperious, usurping patron, or of hungry avaritious churchmen.

Having now divested the Secession scheme of some things that are not peculiar to it, but common to it with the Relief, I proceed to point out and discuss particularly some points in which the synod of Relief differ from the Seceders. These are, 1. Their *antitoleration principles*, which

which are inconsistent with the right of private judgment in matters of religion.

2. The article of *occasional hearing* as they hold it unlawful to hear any ministers but those of their own party, though other ministers have a legal scriptural call, preach scriptural doctrine, and study an evangelical conversation.

3. The unscriptural narrowness of their terms of communion.

Before I enter upon the consideration of these particulars I cheerfully acknowledge that the Seceders are a respectable body of men, their ministers are orthodox in the great system of evangelical doctrines, and have been honoured to be useful in maintaining the truth and purity of the gospel, I cordially wish them success in this good cause. Under their pastoral inspection are a great many serious, and well disposed Christians, respectful of the ordinances of religion, and studious of an evangelical conversation. All this the Relief community will readily own and rejoice in, yet they plainly think, the Seceders err in the above mentioned particulars. And however much they may revere their knowledge and piety in other respects, yet they are to call no denomination of men on earth their *masters*, in any point of faith, but chuse to be directed in all matters of faith and religious obedience by the sure word of prophecy.

I now proceed to a distinct discussion of the several points, above mentioned, in which the synod of Relief differ from the associate body. And 1. They differ from them in their *antitoleration principles*, which are inconsistent with the right of private judgment in matters of religion. What their views are at present about toleration, it is difficult to say, it is more than probable they are of very different sentiments. But in their judicial testimony to which they still profess to adhere, they condemn *all* the tolerations, that ever took place in Britain since the reformation, and among the rest, the toleration granted by Queen Ann 1712 allowing her subjects (papists excepted) the free exercise of their religion, according to their consciences. This is the toleration which we at present enjoy, and the Seceders complain of it, as giving encouragement to latitudinarianism, which, they say, is always attended with laxness of practice. Their words are page 45 'In
' the

' the year 1712, an almost boundless toleration is granted
 ' by which the government and discipline of this church
 ' were exceedingly weakened, and a wide door was opened
 ' for *laxness* in principle, which never fails to bring along
 ' with it *looseness* in practice.' And page 46 they say, ' As
 ' this boundless toleration is a stroke and judgment upon
 ' this church and land: so the growth of error and super-
 ' stition, the genuine fruits and effects of the same, may
 ' be justly reckoned among the causes of the Lord's wrath
 ' against sinful and backsliding Scotland.' From the ju-
 ' dicial testimony then it is evident that the reformation
 which Seceders contend for, if words have meaning, is
 an *uniformity* in one system of doctrines, one mode of
 worship, and one form of church government, to be en-
 forced by the power and sword of the civil magistrate on
 all ranks of persons in *Scotland, England and Ireland*,
 without toleration to any, who cannot agree in the same
 system of doctrines, mode of worship, and form of go-
 vernment. This is the very *kind* of reformation which
 Seceders have hitherto contended for, and this the reader
 is desired carefully to keep in memory. It is evident
 from what has already been quoted from their own testi-
 mony that the reformation which they *contend* for is not
 an unanimity in religious sentiments to be effected among
 the British subjects by a reasonable perswasion and con-
 viction of truth, but a forced profession of a certain system
 of doctrines by the pains of the state. This is further
 evident from the express words of the solemn league
 which the Seceders plead for as of moral obligation.
 In the 4th article of that celebrated league we have these
 words which the Seceders acknowledge to be right and
 binding upon them, ' We shall also with all faithfulness,
 ' endeavour the discovery of all such as have been, or shall
 ' be incendiaries, malignants, or evil instruments, by hin-
 ' dring the work of reformation, of religion, dividing the
 ' king from his people, or one of the kingdoms from ano-
 ' ther, or making any faction or parties amongst the peo-
 ' ple contrary to this league and covenant, that they may
 ' be brought to public trial, and receive condign punish-
 ' ment, as the degree of their offences shall require, or the
 ' supreme judicatories of both kingdoms respectively, or
 ' others having power from them for that effect, shall

judge

judge convenient.' In this famous article we see how all were to be treated, who opposed the solemn league, they were to be delivered into the hands of the magistrate to be punished, in exact correspondence to the spirit of a decree made by a famous Popish council, by which Protestants were to be delivered over to the secular arm to be punished. If Seceders plead for the moral obligation of this article of the solemn league, they are certainly under a moral obligation to support Popery in one of its most pernicious branches; for it is one of the worst parts of the Romish superstition that like the solemn league it punishes the votaries of every system of principles but its own. It is truly mournful to see men pleading for such obligations as moral, which in their own nature are barbarous and antichristian, and in direct opposition to the moral law; for to punish men in their persons or estates for judging for themselves in matters of religion, if otherwise peaceable subjects, is a violation of the sixth commandment of the moral law.

The true nature of that reformation, which Seceders plead for and want to be established in Britain, will further appear from an act of the commissioners of the convention of estates enjoining the national entering into the solemn league and covenant. It is dated at Edinburgh October 12, 1643. 'The commissioners of the convention of estates, having received from the commissioners of the general assembly, the solemn league and covenant underwritten, approved and solemnly sworn and subscribed in the kingdom of England; and having taken the same to their serious consideration do unanimously and chearfully receive and embrace it, as agreeing with that draught, approved by the late convention of estates, and general assembly: and therefore ordains the same to be, with all religious solemnities, sworn and subscribed by all his Majesty's subjects of this kingdom: and that under the pain of such as postpone or refuse, to be esteemed and punished as enemies to religion, his Majesty's honour, and peace of these kingdoms; and to have their *goods and rents confiscated for the use of the public*, and that they shall not *bruike* nor enjoy any benefit, place or office *within* this kingdom. And also ordains all sheriffs, stuarts, and others his Majesty's magistrates,

‘ gistrates, to burgh and land, and committees in the fe-
 ‘ veral shires, to be assisting to ministers and presbyteries,
 ‘ in procuring real obedience thereunto: And that with
 ‘ all diligence they make report to the committee of estates,
 ‘ of the names of all such persons as shall postpone or re-
 ‘ fuse, to the effect course may be taken with them as
 ‘ afore said: and that they may be cited to answer to the
 ‘ next parliament as enemies to religion, king, and king-
 ‘ dom, and to receive what further punishment his Ma-
 ‘ jesty and parliament shall inflict upon them.’

This famous act breathes the true spirit of the solemn league uniformity, and shows what the nature of that uniformity was. This act of the convention of estates contains in it the very *essence of Popery*, and breathes the same intolerant, sanguinary, and persecuting spirit with the bloody and barbarous decrees of the *Council of Trent*.

Having now shown that the Seceders maintain a system of intolerant principles from their judicial testimony, the solemn league itself, and the above mentioned famous act, which is of the same nature with the league itself, I proceed to weigh this part of their *peculiar scheme* in the balance of the sanctuary, and see whether it has the sanction of divine authority and is consistent with the genius and nature of the kingdom of Christ.

In opposition to this intolerant scheme of principles, the Relief ministers maintain, that it is unlawful under the gospel, to *force even the true religion* upon men, by civil pains and penalties, contrary to their inward conviction, and that all such methods of enforcing religion are prejudicial to it, and inconsistent with that liberty wherewith Christ hath made the New Testament worshippers free. But for clearing this part of the controversy between the Seceders and the Relief community, the candid reader is desired to ponder with attention the following things.

I. It were greatly to be wished not only that the British subjects, but all, who bear the Christian name would join together in the belief and profession of the doctrines of the gospel and the Presbyterian form of church government, as these are originally contained in the divine word, and collected and explained in the Westminster Confession and catechisms, if this uniformity could be obtained by their own consent, and the light of truth breaking in upon their

their minds. But I would rather see professors of the gospel much more divided than they are at present, than see them persecuted for conscience sake, and obliged by *punishments* of the outward man, to profess any system of religion in opposition to their inward conviction. Mahomet the false prophet of the east propagated his religion by the sword. The church of Rome hath made herself drunk with the blood of the saints. And the same intolerant and persecuting spirit hath too much prevailed in some of the Protestant churches, who have endeavoured to enforce a rigid uniformity to their own religious system upon those, who differed from them in judgment, by *all civil pains*. This hath been the source of much bloodshed, much suppression of the right of conscience, and manifold disorders among Protestants, to the reproach of religion and their own shame.

The arguments in favour of state uniformities in religion under the gospel, without toleration to those who differ from the national creed and profession, as was the case with the solemn league uniformity, and also with the national covenant of Scotland, have been generally brought from the peculiar kingdom and commonwealth of Israel, while some very important distinctions between that commonwealth and the nature of the gospel-kingdom, have not been attended to.

It will not therefore, I hope, be unacceptable to the candid reader, to suggest to his consideration, a few of the distinguishing points of difference between the ancient commonwealth of Israel, and the constitution of the gospel kingdom; from which it will appear, that all national, or state uniformities in religion, under the gospel, *enforced by civil pains*, whether to *Presbytery, Prelacy, or Popery*, are founded in ignorance, and totally incompatible with the spirituality and independence of the kingdom of Christ. I therefore observe,

2. That the people of Israel received their whole system of law, civil and religious, from God himself, who was, in a peculiar manner, the *head* of that commonwealth. Their whole system of laws was so intimately connected together, that those Israelites who transgressed the laws respecting religion and the worship of God, were to be considered as rebels against his government, and, as such,

they were to be punished. Their magistrates were not left at liberty to govern them by laws of their own framing, but by laws of divine appointment; and the punishments to be inflicted on transgressors of the laws of that commonwealth, were of divine appointment as well as the laws themselves; so that, if any Israelite differed from the national religion, and became an idolater, he was to be put to death as a rebel in God's peculiar kingdom.

But, under the gospel dispensation, no nation receives its system of *civil laws* from God as the Israelites did, nor is any nation under heaven, bound to observe these civil and judicial statutes, which God gave to his people Israel, except so far as any of them were of a moral nature. If men, therefore, under the gospel, violate the laws of the worldly kingdoms, which the wisdom of states has established, they must suffer the punishments annexed to the violation of these laws; but if they are *good and peaceable subjects of the civil state*, they are not to be punished, tho' they differ from the national religion, because, under the gospel, men may be members of the state, without making profession of the true religion; whereas, such was the constitution of the commonwealth of Israel, that every Israelite was obliged to profess the national religion, and could not be a member of the state if he did not.

3. A professed adherence to the whole system of laws, civil and religious, which Jehovah gave that people, was, by express appointment, the *condition* upon which they held the possession of the land of Canaan. If they were to be *obedient*, they were to eat the fruit of the land; but if they were to *apostatize* from the national system of laws, they were to be punished with sword, famine, and pestilence, or to be carried into captivity, which accordingly took place.

But, under the Christian dispensation, men have a civil right to their earthly inheritances, lands, and possessions, not as they *profess* Christianity, or as they belong to this or the other religious denomination, but as they are *subjects* of the civil state, and members of the worldly kingdoms. Christianity makes no alteration in the civil and natural privileges of men: It neither gives them *new* possessions of worldly goods, nor takes away

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old ones, but leaves them the subjects of the several worldly kingdoms, just as it finds them, in the possession of all their natural rights. Only, when it is cordially embraced and believed, it gives men a new covenant-right to these earthly possessions, to which they had formerly a civil or natural right, as members of the state. As, therefore, a profession of Christianity is not, by divine appointment, the *condition* upon which men, under the gospel dispensation, hold their earthly possessions, it clearly follows from this, that no man ought to be punished in his person or estate, though he should not profess Christianity, if he be a peaceable subject of the civil state; and much less ought he to be punished in the one or the other, when he only differs in his judgment from other professing Christians, about some particular points of religion: And tho' a man were cast out of the church by excommunication, he ought only to lose his privileges as a member of the *church*, but none of those privileges which belong to him as a member of the *state*. The excommunicated person ought neither to have his goods confiscated, nor his person imprisoned, according to a law made in a reforming period of the church; a *law*, which was a *disgrace* to human nature, and no part of that *reformation* which Christ hath appointed in his word.

4. It merits peculiar attention, in this controversy, that the Israelites received a special command from God to destroy those idolatrous and wicked nations that inhabited Canaan before they came into it, and also to cut off, without mercy, all those of their own nation who made apostacy from the true religion to idol-worship. But it is to be observed, that they had no command from God to destroy idolaters *out* of Canaan; and if they had done so *out* of their own land, they would have been guilty of a violation of the sixth commandment of the moral law. Strangers, who came from other nations to sojourn among them, or to transact business, they were commanded not to vex or oppress; nor were such to be obliged to conform to the religion of Israel, unless they did it of choice. Now, if the Israelites were not allowed to injure or destroy those idolaters who resided without the limits of the land of promise, what right have Christians,

ians, or Christian magistrates, to vex or oppress even idolaters themselves, if they are good subjects of the state? And far less have they a right to persecute their fellow Christians, because they cannot see with their eyes in every thing in religion. This would be to treat their fellow-men with that rigour and cruelty which the Israelites were not allowed to exercise towards any out of their own country, and under a *milder* dispensation, when the commonwealth of Israel has no more an existence.

These are a few of the capital distinctions between the Jewish commonwealth and the evangelical state; and they show clearly, to persons capable of conviction, that that uniformity in religion, which was to be enforced by civil pains in that peculiar kingdom, respected the Israelites *only*, and is grossly abused when it is made a precedent for any uniformity of a similar kind under the Christian dispensation; unless it can be shown, from the word of God, that there is a Christian commonwealth constituted upon the same foundation with that of ancient Israel, which never hitherto has been proved, and, I am strongly apprehensive, never will be to the end of the world: And, had the proper distinctions between the Israelitish and evangelical state of things been well understood and observed, the British history never would have been stained with accounts of uniformities in religion, *enforced by civil pains*, either to Presbytery, Prelacy, or Popery; and men would have learned to promote the kingdom of Christ, which is, in its nature, spiritual and heavenly, by such spiritual weapons as the venerable apostles of the Lamb used in their day, and not by such carnal weapons as the pains of the state and punishments of the outward man.

Our pious ancestors, in the last century, discovered great zeal for the true religion; but their great *error* was, that they were for forcing their own religious creed upon their fellow-subjects, by the power and sword of the civil magistrate; so that, while they were earnestly contending against Popery in the *gross*, they were unhappily contending for the very *worst* branch, either in the Romish or Pagan religions, *viz.* a system of persecution for conscience sake. That uniformity in religion, which, in that age, they wanted to

effect,

effect, as far as it imposed a profession of the true religion, by civil punishments, upon any, contrary to their inward conviction, was *wrong*, and the very same, as to its essence, nature, and tendency, with the other uniformities enforced by civil pains to Popery and Prelacy, under the successive reigns of Mary and Elizabeth. The truth is, in that age of civil uniformities in religion, persecution and arbitrary power did not change its nature, but only shifted from one side to another, according as Presbyterians, Episcopalians, or Papists, had the power and authority of state on their side. The serpent was the serpent still, tho' it put on a variety of colours, appeared in very different shapes, and assumed different names. When arbitrary power was employed to propagate Popery or Episcopacy, the Presbyterians viewed the monster in a proper light, and called it *persecution*; but when employed to propagate their own scheme, the unhallowed thing was sanctified, and received the venerable name of *reformation*. Pity, that so diabolical a thing should receive so good a name!

After the short and inglorious reign of Mary of England, who enforced a cruel uniformity to Popery, succeeded her sister Elizabeth, a queen of great accomplishments, and, in her religious sentiments, hostile to Popery; but superstitiously fond of Episcopacy, and enforced another uniformity to her favourite system. This obliged many of the Puritan non-conformists to seek a sanctuary in the wilds of America, where they might obtain religious liberty; but, unhappily, they carried over the Atlantic, in their breasts, the same persecuting principle which had but just *burnt* them out of their native country. So strangely inconsistent is the conduct of mankind, that while they justly complain of persecution when they are under it, they will not, from their own feelings, learn the wisdom and humanity not to persecute others. In like manner, the covenanters, after having endured hardships, having secured the interests of the Scotch and English parliaments on their side, were for establishing a system of persecution, and would tolerate none but themselves, tho' their own experience might have taught them better things. And it is well known, what unjust severities

ties they themselves met with, when the balance of power took a different turn in the persecuting reigns of the two royal brothers, Charles and James, till, at the memorable revolution, the rights of conscience and private judgment were better understood, and settled upon a more solid foundation. About this period, church and state politicians began to be *convinced*, that men might be good and peaceable subjects of the civil state, tho' they differed from one another in some points of religion, which, in the former period of cruel and persecuting uniformities, they seemed to have been *wholly ignorant of*: so that, at last, all the state uniformities in religion, *enforced by civil pains and penalties*, which ever took place in Britain, have, in the adorable providence of God, been blasted and come to nothing, because none of them were the means of his appointment for propagating Christianity in the world.

But lest any should alledge, that, according to what I have advanced against state uniformities in religion, Popery itself should be tolerated and the penal statutes against it be repealed, I judge it proper to observe, that Popery ought not to be tolerated, in any Protestant state; not so much on account of the errors of that superstition, as because of its persecuting and cruel genius, and because the votaries of that superstition are *bound* to keep no faith with heretics or Protestants. Or though they should, on any particular occasion, promise solemnly to keep faith with Protestants, a dispensation from the Vatican sets them free from this obligation, whenever they have it in their power to subvert a Protestant state. So that every such state, even from a principle of self-preservation, ought to guard as much against the growth of Popery as against the increase of lions, tygers, hyenas, panthers, and other devouring animals. In every Protestant state, it is equally prudent and political, as reasonable and agreeable to scripture, to tolerate *every denomination* of Christians, who are good and quiet members of the civil community. But the votaries of Popery never were so, in Britain, and from the genius of their superstition and the spirit of dissimulation and cruelty which it inspires, we may hazard a conjecture, that they never will be good and peaceable subjects of this Protestant kingdom, and therefore ought not to be tolerated.

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As I have now shown from the Old Testament, that the Jewish uniformity in religion, which, by divine appointment was enforced by *civil pains* upon the nation of Israel, is no warrant or precedent for any such uniformity under the evangelical dispensation, nor was ever intended so to be, though by many it has been unhappily and ignorantly perverted to this purpose. I now proceed to enquire whether the genius of the New Testament writings, and the state of Christianity, in its first appearance in the world, before it was connected with the worldly kingdoms, gives any encouragement to such compulsory methods of dealing, with men, in matters of religion, And 1. Neither Christ himself, the great head of the Christian cause, nor the venerable apostles, the first and best ministers of his religion, gave any countenance to such violent and unreasonable dealing with men, in matters of religion and the worship of God, either by their doctrine or example. Let us attend to the plain, beautiful, and just description, which the lawgiver in Zion once gave of the nature of his own kingdom to the Roman governor, Luke xviii. 36. "My kingdom is not of this world, if my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." From this description of the nature of his kingdom, it is plain that if his servants were to use the material sword in his kingdom, and to propagate his religion by force of arms, they must fight, and then his kingdom would, contrary to his own description of it, be a kingdom of this world, and in the strictest sense resemble the worldly kingdoms: for this is the usual method of enlarging the boundaries and power of the kingdoms of this earth. The truth is, his servants may warrantably defend themselves, by the *material sword*, if they suffer violence and unjust oppression for adhering to his cause and truth; for this all religion and the great natural law of self-preservation dictate, but they are not to *force* his religion on others by such a carnal weapon. On a certain occasion when two of his disciples, in their fiery and forward zeal, would have had the inhabitants of a certain village consumed with fire from heaven, because they would not receive him, he sharply rebuked them and said, "ye know not what spirit ye are of; the Son of man is

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"not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." This shows us clearly, that even some of Christ's own disciples, may imagine that, while they are persecuting others for not embracing him and his religion, they are only expressing a just zeal for his cause; whilst in doing so they are animated by a spirit very different from his, and acting in direct opposition to the genius and interest of his kingdom, and the design of his coming into the world. He frequently informed his disciples, that they were to undergo many hardships, in adhering to his cause, that they were to endure persecution and the cross, but he never once desired them to persecute others. And to set an example of lawful subjection to the powers; that are, he himself paid tribute to Cæsar.

His venerable apostles, with hearts enflamed with love to their divine master, and zeal for his interest, went abroad through the world, and preached the gospel among the nations, endeavouring, in the most earnest manner, to make men Christians every where, without ever intermeddling with the civil constitution of worldly kingdoms. They were good subjects of the several civil states, where they resided, and in things lawful and pertaining to the outward man, they inculcated on Christians subjection to the powers that are. And in their own practice they exhibited a most Christian and becoming example of patience and submissive meekness, in bearing the cross; but we never find them calling in the aid of the secular arm to force men to profess the Christian religion, or commanding the Christian magistrate to do so. Though many, who, in these latter ages, set up for reformers, have strenuously contended for this sort of reformation in the church, yet neither Christ himself when he came into the world to reform it, and reduce sinners to the service of God, nor his apostles, these great, primitive, and truly evangelical reformers ever recommended such a practice, either in the precepts which they delivered, or the example, which they set.

2. The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour makes it the duty of every Christian to *judge for himself*, in matters of religion, and not to receive implicitly the doctrines, which men teach, except they be agreeable to the holy scriptures. The Bereans are commended for trying the doctrines

doctrines of the inspired apostles themselves, by that part of the canon of scripture, which was then wrote. We are commanded as Christians not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, whether they are of God. With respect to points of faith, we are to call no man master on earth. The apostles did not usurp dominion over the faith and conscience of Christians, in their day, but were helpers of their joy. Now how is it possible, that such passages of scripture as these can be duly observed, if Christians must be obliged to profess any religious system, which the civil magistrate in concurrence with the prevailing body of churchmen in any nation, may think proper to impose? what is the use of our own eyes, if we must see with the eyes of others? what is the use of our own judgment, if we must be implicitly guided by the judgment of others, in matters of religion and everlasting concern? Men had need to be well assured of their own infallibility, before they venture to impose their religious creed upon others. It is the most daring presumption in any to impose their religious system upon others, till they assure them that they will be proxy for them in the judgment-day, and stand trial in their stead before the venerable tribunal of God.

Compulsive measures in religion are not calculated to enlighten the understanding, but to inveigle and mislead the judgment, they may make men *hypocrites*, but can never make them Christians. The truths of the gospel must be embraced from personal conviction and choice, and prevail in the world by their own light and evidence, energy and excellence, otherwise they can never prevail to any valuable purpose. By national uniformities, in religion, enforced by the sword of the magistrate, a whole kingdom may become professors of the truth without receiving it as it is in Jesus, or being brought under law to him. All such methods of propagating Christianity are founded in the ignorance and pride of men; they are foreign to the nature of Messiah's kingdom, incompatible with its genius and spirit, blend it with the kingdoms of this world, and by them the ancient promise will never be accomplished, "that to him shall the gathering of the people be," they have been extremely subservient in promoting the religion of *Mahomet and Rome*, but are peculiarly detrimental in the kingdom of Christ.

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But some may object, that, if the civil magistrate do not interpose to enforce the decisions of the church, by his authority, and oblige men to profess the true religion, the discipline of the church will be weakened, and a door opened for licentiousness of practice. For obviating this objection, I observe, that the gospel, as it is the ministration of the Spirit, will always make a shift to maintain its credit and usefulness in the Word, would men only be so wise as to allow it to stand upon its own bottom, and push its way, in the world, by its own light, beauty, and energy, without debasing it with any heterogeneous mixtures of their own. Nor are violent dealings with men, in matters of religion less hurtful to earthly kingdoms than to the kingdom of Christ. Like Samson's foxes, which set the corn fields of the Philistines on fire, they have oftner than once thrown Britain into a flame of civil discord, augmented by all the rage and fury of religious zeal, whereby the kingdom has been convulsed, and the throne itself made to totter and fall. In opposition to all such violent and unscriptural methods of propagating the Christian religion, I observe that argument and persuasion are methods more suitable to the gospel and to the nature of man. And the better way of propagating the illustrious cause of Christianity is for the ministers of the gospel, like the apostles of the Lamb before them, to go abroad through the world preaching the salvation of the cross, the doctrines, laws, and love of Jesus. They are to compel sinners to come in, that his house may be filled, by all the powerful, winning, and heart-overcoming arguments, which the gospel suggests. With affection, fidelity, and constancy, they are to set before men the numerous and important blessings, that are inseparably connected with a cordial reception of Jesus and his religion, together with the infinite hazard they run, if they do not. And then, though sinners should never be gathered, they shall not lose their reward, but "be glorious in the eyes of the Lord." Such were the weapons of the apostle's warfare, which were made mighty through God for pulling down strong holds, and establishing Christianity in the world, at *first*; and men may now be convinced by long and sad experience, that the same weapons are most proper to *preserve* it in the world. The primitive believers propagated Christianity

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by a steadfast belief and profession of it, a heavenly conversation, and by enduring with patience, submission, and fortitude, persecution and death for the testimony of Jesus. And will any pretend to say, that the violence used, in later times, for propagating the cause of truth, is a wiser and better method than that, which was followed, by those, primitive, illustrious heroes in the Christian cause?

3. The religion of the gospel and the institutions of it are sufficient by the Divine blessing, to answer all the ends of edification in the church of Christ, without the power and sword of the civil magistrate. This is clear to a demonstration, from the *eminent success*, which attended the gospel, during the three first centuries, when the power and influence of the kingdoms of this earth were employed to suppress Christianity and the professors of it. Then the gospel was effectual to the salvation of sinners, not only *without the aid* of the secular arm, but when the kingdoms of this world were *combined* against the Lord and his Anointed.

But let us hear the judgment of the pious and learned Dr. Owen on this point. His words which deserve to be written in characters of gold, are these, "the Lord Christ hath ordained no power nor order in his church, no office or duty that should stand in need of civil authority or force to preserve it, or make it effectual to its proper ends. It is sufficient to discharge any thing of a pretence of being an appointment of Christ in his church, if it be not sufficient to its own proper end, without the help of the civil magistrate. The church-state that is either constitute by human authority, or cannot consist without it, is not from him, he needs it not. He will not borrow the assistance of human authority, to rule in and over the consciences of men, with respect to their living unto God, and coming to the enjoyment of himself." These words of this great, Christian divine, show in the clearest manner, that he entertained right notions of the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, and that he thought enforced national uniformities, in religion, no ordinance of Christ, for promoting his cause and interest in the world, nor deserving the name of reformation in his church. With these sentiments

ments of Dr. Owen agree those of the much celebrated, learned, and judicious Mr. Locke. His words, which we have in his letter concerning toleration, are these; "that
 " however clearly we may think, this or the other doctrine to be deduced from scripture, we ought not therefore to impose it upon others as a necessary article of faith, because we believe it to be agreeable to the rule of faith; unless we would be content also that other doctrines should be imposed on us in the same manner, and that we should be compelled to receive and profess all the different and contradictory opinions of Lutherans, Calvinists, Remonstrants, Anabaptists, and other sects, which the contrivers of symbols, systems, and confessions are accustomed to deliver unto their followers as genuine and necessary deductions from the holy scripture." In a word, all such methods of propagating Christianity are no part of scriptural reformation at all, but the abominable dregs of the *Romish superstition*, which still remain in *some of the Protestant Churches*. They are the very engines used by antichrist, for rearing and supporting his kingdom of ignorance, darkness, and sin in the world: and while the same *intolerant principles* are maintained by any Protestant churches, they may profess as much zeal against Popery as they please, but they retain and hold fast the very *worst branch* of Popery, which is at once inconsistent with the nature of Christ's kingdom, subversive of the unalienable right of private judgment in matters of religion, and is to deal with men after the manner of *brutes* rather than rational creatures.

Thus I have finished what I had to say against persecution for conscience sake, and the antitoleration scheme of enforced national uniformities in religion, under the gospel, which Seceders have hitherto contended for, and declared their approbation of, in their judicial testimony. I leave it to the candid public to judge whether the Relief, or Secession entertain the most rational and scriptural views on this subject.

In two late publications of the Seceders, the Anti-burghers' testimony, and the Burghers' warning, against Popery, both parties seem *now* to be of opinion, that all peaceable members of the civil state ought to be allowed the free exercise of their religion. But how will their *modern*

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sentiments, allowing toleration to all peaceable British subjects, agree with their *judicial testimony*, in which they *severely condemn* the present happy toleration, which we have long enjoyed, allowing all the British subjects (Papists excepted) the free exercise of their religion? speaking of the present toleration, they say, page 45 of the judicial testimony, "Tolerations of *this kind are contrary* to the word of God." How have they come now to *approve* of a toleration, which, in their judicial testimony, they *condemn as contrary* to the word of God, and at the same time profess *still* to adhere to the judicial testimony? On the head of toleration, their judicial testimony, and their late testimony and warning against Popery, are in *direct opposition to one another*, while they declare their adherence to both; so that it is not *easy* to know their real sentiments on this subject. All that can with *certainty* be concluded from what they have *yet* published, on this head, is that they both *condemn* and *approve* the present toleration, which we enjoy. It were to be wished, that men would study to avoid such *glaring* contradictions.

I now proceed to consider the second point of difference, between the Secession and the Relief, viz. the unlawfulness of occasional hearing other ministers of the gospel, besides those of their *own way*, which is still maintained by the Seceders.

The unlawfulness of such occasional hearing is equally maintained by both parties in the Secession, with this difference, that the Antiburghers are consistent with themselves, as they *rebuke* their hearers, who offend in this article; whereas the Burghers suffer their people to pass with *impunity*, though they are sometimes chargeable with the *crime* of hearing occasionally other ministers of the gospel. If this is not *Latitudinarianism* to suffer *public and visible* offenders to escape without *public church-censure*, I leave the impartial world to judge. How will such a practice correspond with the injunction of Paul; "them that sin (that is whose sin is of a *public nature*, or becomes *visible*) *rebuke before all*, that others also may fear." To reconcile such a practice with the scriptural rule of discipline, is not, I suppose, a *task* proper for men of *ordinary* acumen, but for those who have the *dexterity* of reconciling *contradictions*. But without saying
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more on this glaring inconsistency in their conduct, I proceed to try the truth and reasonableness of this principle, hitherto maintained by Seceders in general, that it is unlawful for those under the inspection of Seceding clergymen, to hear, even *occasionally*, other ministers of the gospel, but those of their own denomination.

For clearly discussing this affair, the reader is desired to pay attention to the following observations.

I. The Relief Synod will unanimously agree with the Seceders, that it is unlawful to hear legal and unsound preachers, who overturn, in their discourses, the great gospel-doctrines of particular election, the imputation of Adam's sin, the general corruption of human nature, the freedom of the gospel-offer, the imputation of the sins of the elect to Christ, the imputation of his righteousness to them, regeneration by his Spirit, the perseverance of the saints, or such like essential doctrines of the Christian system. They, who, in their public ministrations, in the church of God, deny or pervert these great points of our holy faith, do not preach the *gospel*, and therefore have no title to be heard, as ministers of Christ at all; and it is exceedingly dangerous and sinful to hear them. And those, who remain under such a ministry, will certainly receive *poison* instead of *food* to their souls. And God will never bless the doctrines and foibles of human invention for building up the New Testament-Zion, and promoting the edification of his people. These resemble the rivers of Damascus, which could not cure Naaman's leprosy, being no appointment of God for that purpose; whereas his own truths resemble the water of Jordan, which cured the leper, by virtue of its being his ordinance, and his blessing attending it.

II. The Seceders and the Relief-Synod are agreed, that it is unlawful and sinful to hear *intruders*, who have *violently thrust* themselves into particular charges, in the church of Christ. Such have not entered in, by Christ, the door into the sheepfold, by the way of his appointment, *viz.* the *call* and invitation of his flock; but have climbed in some other way, by virtue of a *presentation* to the legal benefice, and by doing so have at once robbed Christ of his *authority* and his people of their *liberty*. Such appear evidently more solicitous for the *fleece* than the *flock*,
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for their own *temporal accommodation* than the *edification* of the church of God. Like the false Prophets of old, they have run *unsent*, and therefore there is too just reason to fear, that they will not profit the people. And accordingly it is but too obvious, that the ministry of intruders, in general, thro' the land, is a barren, sapless, and unedifying ministry. This is just what might have been expected, from their unscriptural method of *entring* upon the pastoral office, and the motives, which *influence* them to such a conduct.

III. It is readily granted, that it is wrong in those, who have put themselves under the inspection of a faithful minister to make a *constant* practice of *absenting* themselves from his ministrations, when in their reach. Such a minister they are bound to honour, by a general attendance upon his ministrations, unless something appear in his doctrine or life, that will justify a different conduct. All this will be granted both by the Secession and Relief. But

IV. What the Relief censure as *wrong*, in the Secession on this head, is that the Seceders maintain it to be unlawful for those of *their way* to hear any minister *whatever*, on any occasion *whatever*, but those of their own party; and especially they hold it unlawful to hear the ministers of Relief, on *any occasion*, and would rather have their people to keep silent Sabbaths, if they want worship, in their own churches, than to hear the gospel of salvation from a *Relief-pulpit*. If this proceeds from a fearful apprehension, that some of the Secession-sheep, by wandering into Relief-pastures, may find the food so *sweet and nourishing* as to endanger their returning to the *fold and pasture* of the *association*, I can easily perceive a considerable degree of the *Serpent's cunning*, in making it unlawful to hear Relief-ministers. And if the Seceders would not be offended I would for once inform them, that a timidity of this kind is now generally viewed, by men of judgment and discernment, as the reason why it is held unlawful, by Seceders, to hear occasionally any worthy ministers, whether belonging to the Relief-society or not, and not any *real sinfulness* in the thing itself. Let me ask where is the sin of hearing the Relief-ministers? Are they not all *regularly* licensed to preach the gospel? Do they not all enter upon the ministerial office, by the *free*

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election and call of the Christian people? And have they not *regular* Presbyterian ordination? Is not this Christ's own *appointed* way of entering into the ministerial office? And after they are installed in their office, according to Christ's appointment, do they not preach the *gospel of Christ* to needy, perishing sinners? They are now a society of men so respectable, in Scotland, for preaching sound, evangelical doctrine, that none, who have heard them, free from prejudice, will ever believe any contrary representation of them.

I am very intimately acquainted with the generality of the Relief-ministers. I have also heard many ministers, in the National-Establishment, and in both parties of the Secession, and I ingenuously declare, that I do not think the glorious gospel of the grace of God, both in its doctrinal and practical part, is preached with greater clearness and simplicity, in any denomination of Christians, in the kingdom, than in the Relief society.

Now, if the Relief-ministers have a scriptural call to their office, as it is evident they have, otherwise we are yet to be instructed what a scriptural call is, if they preach the pure and uncorrupted doctrines of the gospel, as they do, and if they have a conversation becoming the gospel, where lies the danger or sin of coming under the pastoral inspection of such men? Or what infection can the purest associate catch from hearing them, on any particular occasion? If they have received a *commission*, from the Lawgiver in Zion, to preach the gospel, and we have never yet seen the contrary proved by their opponents, and I am apprehensive never will, I desire to be informed, where lies the sin or danger of hearing them *execute* that commission, which they have *received* from the head of the church, to testify unto sinners of mankind the gospel of his grace? If they have both a scriptural commission and call to the ministerial work, and preach the gospel, it is neither sinful nor dangerous, but dutiful and safe, to hear them preach the gospel. The Seceders ought first to prove, from the word of God, either that the Relief-ministers do not *preach* the gospel, or that they have not a *right* to preach it (which for reasons sufficiently obvious, I suppose, none of them will attempt to do) before they maintain it unlawful to hear them. To do the one, before they prove the

the other, argues them to be under the government of a *filly, groundless, and unmanly prejudice*, which every man of sense ought to hold in *contempt*. I wish to know what *better* right the ministers of the Secession have to have their sacred ministrations attended than the ministers of Relief have. Can they produce *better documents* of their commission, or prove, that they preach a *better* gospel? Who authorized them to make a *monopoly* of the gospel, that it should be lawful to hear them and none else? Hath the head of the church invested them with an *exclusive patent* to dispense religious ordinances, that it should be only lawful to receive the dispensation of word and Sacrament from them? Hath Christ given to them *alone* the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven? These things must not be taken for granted, but clearly proved, by divine authority, before we will allow, that it is lawful to hear *only* the Seceding ministers, or that it is unlawful for any Christian to hear the ministers of Relief, either stately or occasionally. There is not a *single argument*, which they are capable to urge against the lawfulness of hearing the ministers of Relief, but will *equally conclude* against the lawfulness of hearing themselves. The very same reasoning, which will set aside the commission of Relief-ministers, will set aside their own commission. Thus it appears, with convincing evidence, that there is no law of the *head* of the church, which makes it sinful, for any man, to hear the Relief-ministers preach the gospel of salvation, and therefore any law of *men*, declaring it unlawful and sinful to hear them, ought to be held in *contempt*, and as *much disregarded*, by every Protestant, as the *senseless superstitions of the church of Rome*.

The principal objection, which, I suppose, the Seceders will urge against hearing the Relief-ministers, is, that they are not coming forward in reformation. But this is an *unjust and senseless* calumny; for *they* are determined to adhere to the doctrines and ordinances of *Christ*, and the order of the *first* Christian churches, which is *Bible* reformation, while, at the same time, I have *clearly* proved, that enforced National uniformities in religion, under the gospel, by *civil pains*, the reformation, that *Seceders contend for*, are a *gross* abuse of scripture, subversive of the

right of private judgment, and incompatible with the genius of Christ's kingdom.

There are also many respectable ministers of the gospel, in the National Establishment, who make Christ and him crucified the great theme of their sacred ministrations, who have a regular call to their office, and adorn the doctrines of the gospel, by the purity of their conversation, who may very lawfully be heard preaching the gospel and dispensing its ordinances, and yet the Seceders hold it unlawful to hear *them*, as well as the ministers of Relief; tho' I greatly question if they will be able to prove, from scripture, that it is unlawful to hear such. We hold it lawful to hear worthy ministers of the established church, till from the sacred records, we see it proved, that it is unlawful to do so. The divine word, in this as well as in other points, we hold to be the *only rule of faith and duty*, and will not admit either the *practice of Seceders*, or the *decrees of their church courts*, as the rule by which *our* faith and practice is to be regulated in this matter.

The third point, in which the Relief differ from the Secession, is the unscriptural narrowness of their terms of communion.

This I consider as one of the principal differences between these two bodies of men, and therefore it merits very particular attention. I know it is the custom of the Seceders to represent the Relief-community as latitudinarians in their terms of communion. Latitudinarianism is a term often tossed about at random, and is often ascribed to persons, and religious communities, with very little judgment and propriety; and that it is so ascribed by the Seceders to the Relief community, will sufficiently appear, when their terms of communion are considered. With respect to terms of communion in the Christian church, those, in the *scriptural sense* of the word, are latitudinarians, who are guided by their own fancies, and the dictates of men, in the article of church communion, without observing the rules of Christ's appointment. But with the Seceders, the Relief people must pass for latitudinarians, *merely* because they *differ* from them, however *closely* they adhere to the institutions of Christ.

Church communion is ministerial or Christian, stated or occasional. Stated ministerial communion respects those

those ministers, who are constituent members of the same judicatory, and commonly join together in dispensing religious ordinances. Occasional ministerial communion takes place, when ministers, on any particular occasion, tho' belonging to different denominations, or to other churches of the same denomination, join together in dispensing religious ordinances.

Stated Christian communion takes place, when Christians belonging to the same church usually join together in partaking of sealing ordinances. Occasional Christian communion takes place, when on any particular occasion, Christians from different churches of the same or a different denomination join together in partaking of sealing ordinances.

It is the last kind of communion, viz. when ministers and Christians from different denominations, join together, on any particular occasion, in dispensing and partaking of sealing ordinances that is the precise point of difference, between the Seceders and the Relief community. The Seceders deny, that such occasional communion is lawful. The Relief Synod maintain, that it is lawful, when the difference between these denominations is only about things of *less* importance in religion, and does not affect any truth *fundamental* and *essential* to salvation. This, as far as I understand it, is a true and impartial state of the precise point of difference, on the head of communion, between the Secession and the Relief. But which of these denominations, have right and truth on their side, is now to be the subject of enquiry. And

I. It is observable, and merits the particular attention of the candid reader, that the Seceders themselves have set an example of that very communion, as far as it relates to the church of Scotland, which the Relief-body now plead for. It is well known, that for a considerable time, after the commencement of the Secession, the Seceding ministers declared their *willingness*, to hold communion with those ministers and Christians of the established church who were contending against her defections. Now, if it was lawful for them to hold occasional communion with worthy ministers, and Christians on the establishment, how has it become unlawful *now* for the *Relief ministers*, and their people, to do that very thing, of which

which the Seceders set an example? Is it less a duty *now* to contend against the defections of the church established, than when the Secession commenced? And is it not equally lawful as it was *then* to hold communion with such respectable ministers and members of the national church as are struggling against her defections? Does the distance of time alter the nature of things? or did the act of the associate judicatory, forsooth, declaring a total separation from the national church, make it ever after unlawful to hold communion with her, either in her judicatories or worship? They will have a tolerable degree of presumption, who will say so. The Relief ministers, I am certain, pay no regard to this separating act of the associate judicatory, as determining sin or duty with respect to communion in the church of Christ. If it be agreeable to the genius and Spirit of the New Testament for those, who are the members of the mystical body, and appear to be so by their *deportment*, to have fellowship in the ordinances of the gospel worship, when they have occasion in providence, as it evidently is, then any acts of church judicatories, declaring such communion unlawful, or forbidding it, deserve no more regard than the anathemas of the Vatican and the Roman Pontiff's sentence of excommunication against the Protestants, cutting them off from the communion of *holy mother church*. It is much easier, by the imperious dogmatic sentence of a court, to declare communion with visible saints unlawful, than to prove it so: the one can be done by the ignorance, humour, and pride of men, the other can only be effected by clear scriptural evidence and demonstration. It would have been no loss to the church of Scotland, in her *intercommuning* acts, nor to the Secession-church, in her *separating* acts, that both had considered this subject with more sedate and deliberate attention. What has now been advanced, will show the candid reader, that as far as the Relief-scheme of communion respects the national church, it has the sanction and example of the Secession communion itself, in its *first*, and, in the opinion of many, its *most pure and reformed period*.

In the further prosecution of this subject, that I may avoid unnecessary prolixity, I shall lay aside the consideration of ministerial communion, and confine myself to the

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article of Christian communion. And as the ground of admission to the two seals of the covenant of grace, under the gospel is the same, I shall confine myself chiefly to the article of communion in the holy supper, as this will fully illustrate the point in difference, between the Relief and Secession, on the head of communion, and show which of these denominations comes *nearest* the *sure word of prophecy*.

2. I observe, that the terms of admission to and exclusion from the sacred supper are unalterably fixed by the great head of the church himself, and to be learned from his word alone. (a)

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(a) I entertain a suspicion, that the Seceders will find fault with me for maintaining, "that the terms of admission to the Lord's table are only to be found in the divine word." I shall assign the reason of this suspicion. At a sacramental solemnity, a few years ago, I delivered a short discourse relative to the sacred ordinance of the Supper, the principal design of which was to prove "that the terms of admission to this divine ordinance were only to be found in the word of Christ, and that the church had no power to institute her own terms of communion." One would think that doctrine of this nature could offend none, who have a becoming veneration for the holy Scriptures as the alone rule of faith and practice in the church of Christ. A certain Burgher clergyman however, in the neighbourhood, was so *mightily* chagrined and enraged at my discourse, that on a following sabbath, he made me his text, railed against me a whole sermon, and employed all the eloquence he was master of to confute the doctrine I had delivered, and to put his hearers on their guard against it. And he discovered *admirable wisdom* as well as regard to *truth* in confuting my discourse, upon the vague report of his hearers, before he knew certainly what was to be confuted. Upon being informed that he had made me his text in the pulpit, an honour, of which, I never thought myself worthy, and which I would never confer on *him* as long as there is a text in the Bible; I wrote him a few things, which I delivered in the discourse, on church-fellowship, which, from his known principals, I suspected would be most obnoxious to him. As these things

He hath not left these to be framed, changed, diminished, or augmented, by the arbitrary appointments of men. The office-bearers in his house have only the execution of that system of government and laws committed to

things seemed to have turned the gentleman's stomach, I shall here communicate them to the public.

I. I observed, that the covenants National and Solemn league ought not to be made terms of communion in the church of Christ, unless it can be shown from the word of Christ, that they are terms of his appointment.

II. I observed, that a state uniformity of religion, under the gospel, enforced upon the consciences of men, by *civil pains and penalties, without toleration, is Popery*, and if pursued in all its consequences, will lead to the infallible chair of the ghostly father of Rome.

III. I observed, that my brethren and I had no liberty in our own minds to make these things terms of communion, or walls of separation, between us and other Christians, which had no existence for nigh 1500 years after the terms of the Christian-fellowship were unalterably fixed by Christ and his apostles. These were the very points, which so *mightily* offended the Seceders, and particularly the *clergyman*, in my neighbourhood, and after all the foolish noise and clamour he and some of his brethren raised against them, I put both him and them to defiance to prove them false from the word of God. I wrote him these points, and begged that he would write me his judgment of them, and confute them from the infallible word if he could. I was conscious he was incapable to do this, and accordingly he declined this fair method of deciding the controversy, and wanted to shuffle over the affair with a conference, which for reasons I assigned him, I did not think proper at that time; for I was particularly desirous to get a hold of him in writing, which he was extremely cautious to avoid. But as I wished to bring the controversy, between him and me, to a clear and decisive issue I proposed to take in both our proposals, *viz.* that we should first write our sentiments to one another, upon the points in difference, and then conclude with a conference in the presence of proper witnesses. This last proposal as well as the first he refused to comply with. I proposed also to go to his house and talk with him in a friendly man-

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to them, which he hath appointed. As in respect of doctrine they are to teach all things that Christ hath commanded; so in their judicative capacity, they are sacredly bound to observe that order and discipline, which he hath appointed to be observed in his church, till his second coming. The under shepherds have no right, by their own authority, to admit or exclude from sealing ordinances, in his church, but only to *declare* and *faithfully* to observe the terms of church-fellowship, which he hath appointed. And because men in their different generations are so unhappily disposed, in this, and other points to deviate so widely from the revealed will of Christ, it is remarkable, that he concludes both Testaments with a very *serious caution* to the church against such deviations. The last injunction, which he delivered unto the Old Testament church, we have *Mal. iv. 4.* "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb, for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." And *Rev. xxii. 18, 19.* we have his parting declaration to the New Testament church: "For I testify unto every man, that heareth the words of the prophecy

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her on the subject of our differences, which proposal also he declined to accept. This is a genuine account of the correspondence between him and me, which I am persuaded he will not deny, but if he venture to deny it, I offer to prove the truth of the account, by a copy of our whole correspondence in my custody.

I have been the more particular in giving a *distinct* and *just* account of the state of the controversy, between this Burgher-clergyman and myself, that the public might be set right in their notions concerning it; because I know many *gross falsehoods* about that affair, have been *industriously* disseminated in the country, by the *Seceders*. I would be pleased to see the Reverend gentleman in my neighbourhood appear at the bar of the public, and attempt to confute the propositions formerly mentioned in this note, for which he made me his text in the pulpit; but I have no expectation he will do this, because I know he is incapable, from the Word of God, to show their falseness, notwithstanding all the foolish noise he hath made about them.

‘of this book, if any man shall add unto those things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the Holy city, and from the things that are written in this book.’ As therefore it is so dangerous to deviate from the revealed will of Christ, it must be so particularly in the affair of church communion. And in this *great point* the churches do well to take heed to what the Spirit saith to them, rather than to the dictates or practices of fallible men. This suggests to me the propriety of considering an argument, often urged by the Seceders, in defence of their scheme of communion, and which, I have been credibly informed, has been urged by the Reverend gentleman referred to in the note. He maintained, in justification of the Secession terms of communion, ‘that they were the very same with the terms of communion observed by the church of Scotland in the second reformation period’ I own this is a very popular argument, but when weighed in the ballance of the sanctuary or right reason, is there a *single grain of weight in it*? Does it not evidently take for granted what ought to be proved *viz.* that the terms of communion observed by the church of Scotland, in that period, were agreeable to scripture, and the example of the primitive, apostolical churches? I beg leave to inform the gentleman and the public, that it is a downright falshood to say, that the terms of communion, in the Burgher-secession, are the same with those of the church of Scotland, in the forementioned period; for in that period the *actual* performance of the work of covenanting was the term of communion in the church of Scotland. But it is too notour to be denied, that the Burghers have entirely laid aside the *swearing of covenants*, and are as *dilatory* in actually performing the work of covenanting as *noisy* in insisting on its obligation, which is a clear demonstration of the common and true maxim, *that the practice of men often gives their profession the lie.*

That the church of Scotland, in the above period, made actual covenanting a term of communion with her is evident from the express words of the act of assembly, August 30. 1639. ‘we, by our act and constitution ecclesiastical

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‘do approve the foresaid covenant, (*viz.* the national one) in all the heads and clauses thereof. And ordain of new, under *all ecclesiastical censure*, that all the masters of Universities, Colleges and Schools, all scholars at the passing of their degrees, all persons suspect of papistry, or any other error, and finally, *all the members of this kirk and kingdom, subscribe the same.*’ From this act of assembly it is evident, that all the members both of church and state, in Scotland, were obliged to join in the National covenant under *all ecclesiastical censure* which certainly includes *excommunication* from sealing ordinances if they did not.

And by an express order of Lords and Commons February 2. 1643. the Solemn league was to be tendered to all men within the parishes of England, above the age of eighteen. And under what penalties the swearing of this league was to be forced upon all the subjects of Scotland we have already seen, in the forecited act of the convention of estates. From all which it is evident, that the swearing, both of the National covenant and the Solemn league, was a term of communion in the church of Scotland, in the second reformation period.

But was not this a term of communion of the church’s own making? was it known by the apostles of Christ? Had it an existence for nigh 1500 years after these venerable inspired men were in their graves? No man is capable to show, from the New Testament, that the swearing of any covenant or league was ever established as a term of church-fellowship, by the apostles of the Lamb, or ever observed, by the first and best Christian churches planted by them, either to their *own* members or those of *other* churches. I would have the faith of Christians on this point founded, not in the dictates of men, but in the truth of God. If it be said, that the churches of Macedonia swore a covenant, when they are said to give themselves unto the Lord, I observe, that, like all the other apostolic churches, they gave themselves to the Lord by a cordial belief of the doctrines of Christ and obedience to his law, and in baptism and the Holy Supper, and no man can prove, that the giving themselves to the Lord was by *expressly* swearing any covenant; for if this had been recommended to them, by the apostles, certainly the same

thing would have been recommended to the other churches planted by these holy men, and observed by them accordingly. But we read nothing of this practice being recommended to the other apostolic churches nor observed by them. If any person read the New Testament, with the honesty and integrity becoming a Christian, he will see in the constitution of the apostolic churches, that the first Christians were admitted to full communion in sealing ordinances, without the formality of any oath whatever. No such thing was ever demanded of them by the apostles, or observed by them as necessary to church communion. If this then be true, and no man can show that it is not, I want to be informed, by what divine authority the church in later ages imposes such a formality upon Christians, as to refuse to admit them to sealing ordinances upon the simple, primitive, apostolical plan. If the inspired apostles of Christ admitted the first Christians to communion without an oath, from whom has the church in after times derived power to exclude the disciples of Jesus from the 'seals of the covenant, unless they swear oaths as the condition of their admission? I hesitate not to say, that such a term of communion is only a term of the church's own making. And on this point, the question may justly be put to her, who hath required this at your hand? It were well, if men, who make such a bustle about *later periods* of the church, would direct their attention a little more to the *first, pure, apostolic churches*, and the order and form of fellowship instituted and observed in them. And if the order and form of fellowship observed in the first Christian churches planted by the apostles of Christ were carefully attended to, a great many of our modern terms of communion, now so much in vogue, would sink into that *insignificance* and *contempt* which they *deserve*, and men would gradually return to the *pure and primitive simplicity* of the gospel worship. Having now shown, that the terms and conditions of church communion are to be learned from the word of Christ *alone*, and that the church has no *power* to institute her own terms of communion, I proceed to observe.

3. That according to the word of inspiration none have a right, in the sight of God, to the *seal* of his covenant in the Holy Supper, but those who are brought within the *bond* of the covenant. It is evident from scripture, that

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that there is a great difference between a right to hear the *gospel*, and a right to the *Sacramental table*. All men, as they are the sinful and perishing descendents of Adam, have a right to hear the gospel, because Christ himself gave his apostles, and in them, all ordinary ministers after them, a commission to go into all the world, and preach the gospel unto *every creature*. This *unlimited commission*, given, by the chief shepherd, to all his under shepherds, joined with his own *general invitations* 'Look to me and be saved all the ends of the earth' 'Ho every one that thirsteth come to the waters' 'Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out' gives all men a right to hear the gospel, and to believe in him, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, wise and foolish, sober and profane, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, sensible and insensible sinners.

But though all men, as sinners, have a right to the *gospel table*, none but believers, in the sight of God, have a right to the *sacramental table*. This table is covered with children's bread, and therefore none but children have a right to it. It is a feast prepared by the glorious bridegroom of the church for his spouse; for all those, who have matched with him, and by faith taken hold of the everlasting covenant. It is an ordinance, intended to seal the benefits of the covenant to believers, to strengthen and confirm their graces; but it is not a *converting* ordinance, nor intended to be the mean of communicating the *first* grace to the soul. It is graciously intended to be the food of the *new nature*, but not the mean of *implanting* that nature.

All those, who worthily partake of the Lord's supper, must have on the wedding garment of imputed righteousness, and inherent grace. The first is the foundation of their title, in the sight of God, to this holy entertainment, the last is their preparation for it, in respect of the frame and temper of their souls. They must be clothed with Immanuel's righteousness, that their persons and service may be accepted. And they must have the graces of the holy Spirit, both in habit, and exercise, that they may perform the sacred action of communicating, with a frame and disposition of soul *suited* to that holy solemnity of the gospel worship. For the right performance of this or any
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other holy duty, they must have oil in their lamps, and their lamps burning. And accordingly when the inspired apostle of the Gentiles delivers this sacred institution of the supper, unto the church, as what he himself had received of the Lord, he says, ' But let a man examine himself, and ' so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.' Being well assured that this ordinance was appropriated to the *children of God*, he strictly enjoins *every* professor, in the church of God, before he joins in it, to examine his *heart*, and *life*, in order that he may be able to ascertain his character as a *child of God*, and having brought the enquiry to a comfortable issue, then to approach the table of the Lord, and eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him. Thus it appears, that believers *only* have a right, in the *sight of God*, to approach the sacramental table. And if any intermeddle with such sacred things, who are *not believers*, they will eat and drink, judgment to themselves.

And as none but believers have a right to the holy supper, in the *sight of God*: so *all believers* have this right. Being *allegally* the children of God, they have the same *common* title to the *children's bread*. Let it be remembered that the righteousness of Christ, graciously imputed and received by faith, is the *alone* foundation of the believer's title to this ordinance, and all the other peculiar privileges of the covenant of grace. But this righteousness is *equally* imputed to *every* child of God, and embraced by a faith of the divine operation, and therefore *all* his children have the same fundamental title to the children's bread. And though they may communicate unworthily, if the oil in their lamps be not burning, if their graces be not in exercise, yet this does not invalidate their *title* to the Lord's table, which is not founded in their *graces* or *frames*, but in their *justification*, by Immanuel's righteousness. In such a case they are disqualified in point of *frame* for a *right* participation of this ordinance, but this no more forfeits their *title* to it, than by failing in the right performance of any duty, they lose their interest in the new covenant itself, or their title to the blessings it contains: a most comfortable reflection!

4. Having now shown that it is *real saintship* that entitles men to the sacred supper, in the *sight of God*, I next observe

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observe that it is the *visibility* of saintship *before the world*, that entitles men to communion in the *eye of the Church*. The truth of saintship, or the reality of Christianity, in the heart, is known only with absolute certainty to God himself who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men. It is according to the *real* state and character of men that Christ now forms his judgment of them, and will judge them at the last day. But it is according to the *visibility* of characters, before the world, that the church is to form her judgment concerning them. The church is to judge of professors, not by their internal character, for this is the sacred prerogative of the Lord Almighty, but by their outward character. It is the *fruits* of professors, or what they *appear* to be, that constitutes the rule of the church's judgment, in admitting them to, or excluding them from the seals of the covenant. Now, as it is not *her* province, to judge the hearts of men, and as many have the *form* of godliness without the *power* of it, the church, according to *her* rule of judgment, may warrantably admit *hypocrites* to the Lord's table, while they are *not known to be such*, but maintain a *fair outward* profession and deportment: though such, on account of the want of *real* religion, or indulgence in secret sins, are an abomination in the *sight* of God, and have *no* right to his table, in *his* judgment, which is always according to truth, and not the appearance of things.

Now according to scripture two things are evidently necessary to constitute one a *visible saint*, so that the office-bearers of the church may warrantably admit him to a participation of the sacred supper, viz. a suitable measure of knowledge and a conversation becoming the gospel.

Though there are very different degrees of knowledge to be found among professors in the church, and it would be highly improper and contrary to every principle, both of scripture and reason, as well as injurious to the lambs of Christ's flock, to deny sealing ordinances to weak Christians, because they have not the same measure of knowledge as the most advanced Christians; yet it is indispensibly necessary, that one who is to be admitted to the Lord's table possess *such a measure* of religious knowledge, and especially of the knowledge of the covenants of *works and of grace*, as will consist with *real* religion. It is also requisite, that the intended communicant possess
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and discover such knowledge of the nature, ends, and uses of the holy supper, as will render his communicating a *reasonable service*. Both scripture and reason require this. Paul shows clearly, in the words of institution themselves, that those communicate unworthily, who do not discern the Lord's body, who have not sufficient knowledge to look through the sacramental elements of bread and wine to the great spiritual mysteries represented by them. And it is one of the clearest dictates of reason, that no moral or religious duty can be rightly performed, except its nature and end be in *some* measure understood.

It belongs to the office-bearers of the church, to judge of the measure of religious knowledge, which qualifies candidates for the communion table. And to faithful ministers of the gospel this will be one of the most difficult, and trying parts of their work. Ah, who is sufficient for it! To judge properly in this matter, much fidelity, prayer, heavenly wisdom, and circumspection are necessary, lest they admit the ignorant, or exclude those, who in respect of knowledge ought to be admitted. And their conduct will at last be reviewed by the Chief Shepherd, whether they have acted a faithful, conscientious and upright part in admitting to or excluding from his holy table, in point of knowledge. On this particular it is further necessary to observe, that the children of God in this present state are imperfect in knowledge as well as in holiness, and no *good* reason can be assigned why they should be excluded from the Lord's table, for the imperfection of their knowledge any more than of their holiness, if they discover as much knowledge of the truths of religion, and the nature and uses of the Lord's supper, as will consist with their being esteemed Christians, in the judgment of charity. And this brings me to consider an objection frequently made by the author of *the Relief scheme considered*, which does not deserve a serious refutation, were it not so frequently urged in his pamphlet with so much confidence. He objects that Presbyterians ought not to receive into their communion those, who differ from them in their notions of church government, such as Independents or Episcopalians, because these men have had sufficient means of conviction, and still remain obstinate. For my part I can see neither sense nor Christianity in this objection

jection. There is certainly evidence sufficient in the word of God to convince every man of every truth contained in it, otherwise it would not be a sufficient revelation of his will. If we apply this observation to the Presbyterian form of government, I reckon there is sufficient evidence and means of conviction; in the New Testament, to convince every man of the truth of the Presbyterian form of government, as Christ's institution, but yet many cannot see this evidence so as to be convinced by it. And every man who will not be led by implicit faith, must, if he is a man of integrity, deny his assent to this form of government, whatever means of conviction he have, till he be really convinced of its truth. I consider those men, who are not convinced of the truth of Presbyterian government, as weak brethren in this respect, who, notwithstanding all means of instruction, have not yet got their judgment fully informed in this branch of Christian knowledge. And till God be pleased in his adorable goodness to convince their judgment, we ought to receive them as *weak* in this point of faith, just as the stronger Christians in the Church of Rome were to receive into their communion their weak Jewish brethren, who were still in an error concerning the ceremonial system, till once in the kindness of providence their minds were enlightened in the knowledge of the truth. Such a conduct would be more agreeable both to the truth and spirit of Christianity, than the method observed in the Secession of shutting the door of communion against such weak brethren. But this part of their conduct need not occasion any surprise as they will not hold communion with the Relief-community, who adhere to the Presbyterian form of government as well as themselves; because they will not *break* the bond of fellowship between them and those, who appear, by the holiness of their deportment, to be the visible members of Christ's body, though not of the same external denomination with themselves; and yet in this respect I hope to show to the conviction of honest unprejudiced men, that the Relief scheme of communion is agreeable to the word of God, and that the Secession scheme of communion is a *mere imposition* upon his church, and an unreasonable abridgement of the liberty of his servants.

The other thing necessary to constitute one a visible saint, so that the church may lawfully admit him to the holy supper, is a life and deportment becoming the gospel. Though men have the clearest understanding of the whole system of divine truth, and of the nature and uses of the holy supper, yet if they are not studious of an evangelical deportment, but immoral in their practice, they ought not to be admitted to the table of the Lord. It is only by the fruits and expressions of grace in the life, that it evidences its reality in the heart. Whatever inward feelings a Christian may have of the evidence and operations of grace in his heart, satisfying himself that he is a child of God, it is impossible for him to give mankind or the church of God any satisfying evidence and conviction of his Christianity but by the *holiness of his life*: and if he is an upright Christian, his outward holiness will be the genuine expression of his inward grace. Wherever the *fruits* of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, are implanted in the heart, and appear in the life, against such there is no law. There is no law of God condemning such graces themselves; for they are his own production. There is no law of God excluding the persons, possessed of these divine graces, and having them shining forth in their *practice*, from his holy table; for these are the very persons whom he makes welcome to it, and who have a right to this feast of fat things. But there are *laws of men* and statutes framed by *some religious denominations* in Scotland, expressly *excluding* from the Lord's table with *them*, many precious saints, because they will not adhere to *their party alone*, and adopt *all their distinguishing peculiarities*; though they both possess the *fruits* of the Spirit, and by the purity of their deportment, give evidence, that they possess them, and though by every law of God they are welcome to his table. In this point therefore the law of God and the laws of *those religious societies*, evidently interfere, and which of these ought to be obeyed, when they are in direct opposition, to one another, let every one determine who has a just regard for the authority of the Most High. Such *human laws* excluding great numbers from the table of the Lord, who possess these fruits, and give good evidence, that they possess them, are sanctified in

in this blinded age, and receive the *specious* name of *strictness and reformation*, while in fact they are an *unhallowed* subversion of the authority of the *only* lawgiver in Zion, an unreasonable and unscriptural imposition on his church, and a delusion the more dangerous and destructive, that it is varnished over with the *specious* pretence of more than ordinary strictness and zeal for truth. Satan never tempts with greater success, nor ever does more real injury to the kingdom of Christ, than when he is *transformed into an angel of light*. When he appears in his *true* character as an enemy to truth, the cloven foot is *easily* discovered, but when he commences a *religious bigot*, and assumes the character of a *reformer*, his snare is deep and dark, and many well-disposed persons are entangled. And I consider all these terms of communion which exclude those, who possess and bring forth into practice the fruits of the Spirit, from the Lord's table, as a deep snare of *satan*, who is acting still in character as the *deceiver* of the nations, by disposing churchmen to frame laws *diametrically* opposite to the law of God, and the success of his deceit is but too evident, when so many in the generation, are so much captivated with such arbitrary, human appointments in the temple of God.

But perhaps some will have the assurance to tell the world as the author, of *the Relief scheme considered*, has done, that when Paul mentions the fruits of the Spirit in chap. v. of his epistle to the Galatians, his words have no relation to the article of communion, nor ought to be applied to that purpose. But I would ask this Reverend gentleman, whether in dispensing the ordinance of the Supper (if ever he dispensed that ordinance) he never quoted this passage of Paul concerning the fruits of the Spirit, as *ascertaining and illustrating* the character of the children of God, who are both entitled and invited to his table? And whether he never quoted Paul's long and black roll of the works of the flesh, as *ascertaining* the character of those prohibited from the sacramental table? It is easy for a man to trifle with the sense of scripture, and to torture it till it speak the *sbibboleth* of his party, but such a practice is *base, disingenuous, dangerous*, and *unworthy* of a man of integrity. It is certainly agreeable

to the mind of the Spirit of truth, that the same conclusions, will hold in opposite senses, with respect to the *works* of the flesh, and the *fruits* of the Spirit, mentioned by Paul. Let therefore justice be done the passage, and the contrast fairly and candidly stated between the *works* of the flesh, and the *fruits* of the Spirit, and it will place the terms of the Christian fellowship upon a true foundation, and show, to the conviction of *every fair and upright enquirer*, what they are. If the works of the flesh are *secretly* indulged in, do they not exclude the persons guilty, from the sacred Supper, in the sight of God? If the fruits of the Spirit are implanted in the heart, have not the persons possessing them a right to the holy supper, in the sight of God? If the works of the *flesh* are performed *openly*, or become *visible* before the world, are not the persons guilty justly excluded from the Lord's table by the church, according to the scriptural rule of judging? If the graces and fruits of the Spirit become *visible and apparent* in a holy practice, are not such visibly gracious persons to be admitted to the Lord's table by the church, if she observe the scriptural rule of judging men according to their fruits? or take the argument in this form, that if possible I may make Christians see and feel the force of it. If the works of the flesh are *really and visibly* indulged in, do they not exclude the persons guilty from sealing ordinances, both in the judgment of God and the church, if she judges righteously? Certainly. He would justly be deemed a *Latitudinarian*, and does not deserve the name of a Christian, who would deny it. In like manner, and by parity of reason, if the fruits of the Spirit are *possessed*, by any in their *hearts*, and *exhibited* in their *lives*, have not such persons a title to the Lord's table, both in the sight of God, and by the rule of the church, if she is governed, in her terms of admission, by the divine word? Most certainly: They err not knowing the scriptures, who will venture to deny it. Could men be prevailed with to lay aside *bigotry* and *party-prejudices*, and brought to view this matter in an *impartial* light, and to weigh it in an *even* ballance, either that of the *sanctuary*, or of *right reason*, they would acknowledge, that the fruits of the Spirit ought to have the same influence in *admitting* to sealing ordinances, as the works of the flesh in *excluding* from them. But unhappily, in the present

present age, the minds of men are so *blinded* and their judgment so *inveigled* with the prejudices, and often *ill founded* peculiarities of a party. that they are incapable of discerning the plainest truths of revelation, if they interfere with the distinguishing sentiments of that religious denomination, with which they are connected: in such cases, instead of enquiring after the mind of God, with integrity and uprightness, they commonly either implicitly believe their own peculiarities, or bring the word of God to the bar of their own shibboleths to be tried by them, instead of bringing their peculiarities to the bar of the word to be tried by it, with a humble disposition to learn the truth as it is in Jesus. I reckon this one of the mournful, spiritual judgments, that hath fallen upon many in this generation, and upon none more than those, who think they are *freest* from it. The censure may be deemed *severe*, but upon mature reflection, on the present state of religion, and the prevailing disposition of religious parties, I see no reason to *retract* it.

But whatever mistakes, in the article of church fellowship, men, under the influence of bigotry and a party-spirit, have unhappily been led into, the following sentiments are agreeable to scripture.

Those, who by faith are interested in Christ's righteousness, *have* as certainly a *title* to his table, as those, who have never believed in him for righteousness, are certainly *without* a title to it. Those, who have received the new nature in regeneration, are as *really qualified* for the Lord's table, in respect of the temper and state of their minds, as those, who are unconverted, are, in this respect, *unqualified* for it. Those, who have their lamps burning, or their graces in exercise, are as *really prepared* for the Lord's table, in respect of a *present frame*, as those who are engaged in the actual commission of sin, are *really unprepared* for that holy service, in point of present frame. And those, who are *visibly holy*, in their outward deportment, are as *justly entitled* to this ordinance, in the eye of the church, if she sees and judges righteously, as those who are *visibly sinful*, and open transgressors of the holy commandments of God, are *justly excluded* from his table by the church. It is just as great a deviation from the truth of the gospel, to exclude from the Lord's table, those, who

who are walking in the Spirit, and bringing forth his fruits to view, in their practice, as to admit those to it, who are walking in the flesh, performing the works of it, and bringing forth fruit unto death. It is just as great a sin to exclude from the Lord's table those, whom his word *admits* as to admit to it those, whom his word *excludes*. It is just as great latitudinarianism to exclude from the Lord's table *visible saints*, as to admit to it *visible sinners*. To deny the children's bread to those, who manifest the temper and carriage of the children of God, is *equally culpable*, in the stewards of his house, as to give it to dogs, or those, who, by their temper and carriage, visibly show themselves to be the children of the wicked one.

Let the charge of latitudinarianism now fall where it should. I am doubtful it will be found in the skirts of the Secession itself. For the candid reader cannot but perceive, that when the opposite states, characters, and works of good and bad men, the fruits of the Spirit, and the works of the flesh are fairly and justly contrasted, with respect to the influence they should have on church-fellowship, the argument concludes very *unfavourably*, with respect to those among us, who so straiten the door of their church-communion as to exclude *thousands*, who both *have* the fruits of the Spirit, in *reality* and *appearance*, and whose communion hinges neither upon the *reality* of faintship, nor the *visibility* of it, but upon a professed unanimity of sentiment with them in the *peculiarities* of a party, which a man may do and after all be destitute both of the *power* and *form* of godliness. Such plans of communion may appear *strict* and bear the *venerable name of reformation*, and therefore many serious and well disposed Christians are *ignorantly and unwarily* led into them; but notwithstanding all their apparent sanctity, they are subversive of *bible* reformation, they are mere church-appointments, and as great *latitudinarianism*, as to admit those to a communion table, who are visibly indulging in the works of the flesh. From what has been suggested, on the fruits of the Spirit and the works of the flesh, for illustrating the article of communion in the church of Christ, the reader may see the ignorance of the author of the *Relief scheme* considered when he says 'that it is not the apostles design, in this place, to teach any thing
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‘about communion at all.’ But with his good leave, the apostle teaches a great deal and to *excellent* purpose about communion, in this passage, as he explains and ascertains the characters of the persons excluded by the law of God, from his table, and of those, who by the same *law* are *entitled* to come there. But because Paul’s plan of communion, in this place, will not quadrate with this author’s plan, therefore, out of complaisance to *him* and *his* party, the venerable apostle must not be allowed to teach any thing that thwarts their scheme; which is a glaring instance of the observation formerly made, of arraigning the divine word at the bar of their peculiar principles, to be tried by them, and to be approved or rejected, as it is found to quadrate with them or not.

There are two unhappy extremes in communion, in the day in which we live. The first consists in a *promiscuous admission* of all professors, without ever enquiring into their knowledge or character. This plan of communion admits of persons destitute of every *visible evidence* of Christianity. It joins together the ignorant and the knowing, the precious and the vile, the holy and profane in one *motely association*, without any proper regard to what constitutes the character of a Christian, either in the judgment of God or the world. The other extreme in communion is the reverse of the former and equally unscriptural, but much better calculated to deceive and impose upon conscientious, well-disposed men. It consists in making several things terms of admission to sealing ordinances, which are only *accidental* to the character of a Christian, which are neither *essential* to the Christian character, nor properly *declarative* of it before the world, and which he may either *have*, or *want*, and yet be both a *real saint* in the sight of God, and a *visible saint* in the eye of the world and of the church.

The first of these extremes, in church fellowship, resembles a public market, where all men, without distinction, may appear, and make a purchase. The second extreme resembles a narrow garment, which cannot contain the human body, without either straitning and girding it too much, or being itself rent in pieces. Such is the case exactly with those plans of communion, which, by their framers, are made narrow and contracted, beyond the scriptural rule,

rule, they straiten, squeeze, and render those uneasy, who are under them, even while they remain together, and at last they are generally rent asunder, and break the bond of fellowship in the worship of God. Many mournful instances of this might be mentioned, I shall only mention one, closely connected with my subject, and fresh in the memory of many still alive, viz. the unhappy rupture, that took place in the Secession, about 33 years ago. Had the Seceders continued their first plan of communion, or had they made nothing necessary to their communion but what the word of God does, had they resolved to hold communion with visibly good men, and not with visibly bad men, according to the great scriptural distinction of characters, their union might have remained. But their first grand error was in breaking up communion with godly ministers and Christians in the church of Scotland, so that they would receive none into their fellowship, however reputable for knowledge and piety, if they would not adhere to their party alone. As one mistake commonly paves the way to another, in the year 1743, they swore a solemn covenant at Stirling, and decreed, that the swearing of that bond should be the term *henceforth* of ministerial and Christian communion with them. This placed communion, with *them*, upon a footing and condition *unknown* in the *apostolic* churches. No man, as I formerly showed, can prove, that the apostles and first Christians ever observed such a condition of church fellowship. The apostles of the Lamb partook of sealing ordinances all their life-time, without swearing any covenant, and they will have a pretty good stock of assurance, who will take upon them to say, that the apostles did not observe the terms of communion appointed by Christ. But had the apostles lives been prolonged, till the year 1743, and had they applied for communion to the *Secession church*, it is evident they could not have been admitted, except they had sworn *her* covenant, or professed to ly open to light, with respect to the duty of swearing it, as a term of communion ministerial and Christian in the church of Christ. This being a condition of communion so *different* from what they had been acquainted with, in the *simplicity* of the *first age* of the gospel, these primitive, holy men might have been in danger of calling it an *imposition* on the
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church of Christ, and insisted to be admitted to communion, without swearing *any* covenant, as they were in their own day, without lying open to light about any such thing as a term of communion: And as this conduct would have totally and irrecoverably cut them off from communion with the *Secession church*, I know not what the *good men* could have done, but either joined the Establishment or Relief, or set up a new party separate from both.

The Seceders having once and again straitened the door of their communion, they found themselves squeezed so straitly, that in a very little time they broke up communion with one another, and though they had sworn, but very lately before, to strengthen one another's hands, alas! in downright contradiction to their own solemn oath, they did every thing, in their power, to weaken one another's hands, and to render each other useless, to the degree of giving one another to the devil, by the higher sentence of excommunication: which unhallowed sentence will stand on record to coming ages as a monument of the mournful effects of *discord* among brethren, and a monitor to Christians of the truth of the maxim and instruction of inspired wisdom, 'the beginning of strife is like 'the breaking forth of waters'. Such breaches of fellowship, are the natural effect of an *unedifying* and *unscriptural* narrowing the door of church-communion. And though religious denominations formed on such a plan of communion, may maintain their union for a time, from a variety of considerations, their plan has an *essential, inbred tendency*, to make them fly off from one another in disjointed splinters. All such plans of communion have a tendency towards this effect, in their own nature; they have produced their natural effect already, in many instances; and there is little reason to doubt, but the effect they have had heretofore, they will have in the generations to come, if men are so unwise, or ill informed, as to adopt them; as in their very *essence* and *constitution* they contain the seeds and principles of *animosity, discord, and division*.

Having spoken so much of what I take to be the scriptural plan of communion, and of what is opposite to it, before I proceed further, I shall lay before the reader the words of the venerable Westminster assembly on this sub-

ject, chap. xxvi. of the confession, Sect. 2. we have these remarkable expressions, " Saints by profession are bound
 " to maintain an holy fellowship in the worship of God,
 " and in performing such other spiritual services as tend
 " to their mutual edification, as also in relieving each
 " other in outward things according to their several abilities, which communion as God offereth opportunity,
 " is to be extended unto all those who in every place call
 " on the name of the Lord Jesus."

The last part of this section extending communion to
 " all who in every place call on the name of the Lord
 " Jesus," seems, from the scriptures adduced for the support of it, to respect the giving of charity to all, that bear the Christian name. It is the first part of the section, which relates to the communion of worship, and it declares
 " that saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy
 " communion in the worship of God." Now on this part of the confession I offer to the reader the following short observations. 1. That the Westminster assembly, that compiled the confession, was composed of Independants as well as Presbyterians, and I can entertain no doubt, that they considered one another as saints by profession; as it is scarcely to be supposed, that either of the parties would have met with the other, as members of the same assembly, if they had not viewed each other as professed saints. 2. As both parties were active in framing this article, on the head of communion, they seem purposely to have expressed their sentiments, in *general terms*, that none of the parties might think themselves excluded, and thereby be irritated at the other. And this also seems to have been the reason why they chose scriptures for the support of their views on church-communion, that express the duty of communion in divine worship, in *general, indefinite terms*. 3. It is evident, that the venerable Westminster assembly, who framed this article of the confession, never meant, that, in order to constitute men *saints by profession*, they behoved to know and profess *every* truth in the word of God; for had they intended such a *perfect profession* as this, to be the foundation of church-fellowship, the most improved among that honourable convention, in divine knowledge, would have been *excluded* from the Lord's table; for none of them knew all the truths, contained in
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the word of God, and therefore could not make a profession of *all* truth. And I shall shew afterwards, that, if a profession of *all* divine truths is necessary to constitute one a *saint by profession*, there hath never yet been a saint by profession in the world, nor probably will be in any future generation. So that Presbyterians and Independents, in that assembly, no doubt did, and very well might consider one another as *saints by profession*; and consequently it was lawful for them, according to their professed principles in the confession, to maintain a holy fellowship, in the worship of God.

5. Having now fully shown, that it is *real* saintship, that entitles men to the seals of the new covenant, in the sight of *God* and *visible* saintship that entitles to them, in the eye of the *church*, I proceed to the consideration of another branch of this subject. Though the visibility of saintship entitles men to communion, according to the rule of the church, yet when men who have formerly been admitted to communion, on account of a competency of knowledge, and the external purity of their deportment, fall into *open and visible violations* of the divine law, they are to be excluded by the office-bearers of the church, from communion with her in sealing ordinances, till they make a solemn public profession of repentance, and be rebuked before *all* as Paul directs. And after the scandal is thus purged in a scriptural manner, they are to be restored to the communion of the church. But if they refuse to hear the church, and to submit to scriptural discipline they are to be excommunicated by the church, and declared none of her members, and no more to be viewed as *visible saints*, but as *heathen men and publicans*, till they profess repentance, and submit to appointed discipline, when the sentence of excommunication is to be taken off, and their *visible saintship* returns. And if those, who are guilty of public sins are expressly appointed in scripture to be rebuked before the church, what impiety are those church-officers guilty of, who receive a *sum of money* from wealthy and proud offenders, instead of making them undergo the appointed discipline of the sanctuary? Is not this plainly to barter an ordinance of Christ for the world, and to make his Father's house, a house of merchandize?

What has been above advanced also clearly shows how weak and invidious an objection is, which is frequently urged, by the Seceders, against the communion of saints maintained by the Relief-synod. They object, that according to the Relief terms of communion, those who are saints in reality, ought to be admitted to sealing ordinances though they are guilty of the most enormous, visible crimes, as David *continued* a saint, though guilty of adultery and murder, and therefore, according to Relief-terms of communion, he ought still to have *remained* in communion with the church of God. But here the Relief scheme of communion may adopt the language of David, who said of his enemies, "They laid to my charge *things that I knew not.*" I could scarcely have believed, that any man of sense would have made such a trivial, and false objection against the Relief-scheme of communion, had I not been credibly informed by those that heard him, that a Seceding clergyman, in my neighbourhood, made it in the presence of his congregation, and mentioned David as an instance to illustrate his *weak, false, and invidious* charge. In exhibiting this charge against the Relief-scheme, he must either have been ignorant of it, or intended maliciously to misrepresent it. The last I am unwilling to impute to him, as it would impeach his integrity; but the best apology, that can be offered for him is, that he is *ignorant* of the Relief-principles, and used an *imprudent and ostentatious* freedom of *descanting* and making a *flourish* before his hearers, upon a subject, of which he had *no* understanding. The objection itself is equally destitute of truth and decency, and has no connection with the Relief-principles, but is founded in an entire misconception of them. It is readily acknowledged that David was a saint, when he was guilty of murder and adultery. The principles of grace were in his heart, and though weakened by his enormous transgressions, they were not eradicated. But let me ask the objector this question, was David, before he repented of his sins of adultery and murder, after the commission of them, a *visible saint*? was he not rather a *visible sinner*, and had done things, not only sufficient to exclude him from communion with the church of God, but even worthy of death, and extermination from the land of the living?

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need such *weak* and *trifling* objectors be told, that the *reality* of faintship may remain, when the *visibility* of it is gone? whatever a man may remain, in the sight of God, as to his *real* state and character, he is not a *visible saint* in the eye of the church, when he is going on in any *visible transgression* of the divine law, till, after submitting to regular, scriptural discipline, he be restored to the communion of the church. This is what the Relief ministers maintain on this point, and if any can prove, from scripture, that they are in an error, they are at liberty to make the experiment when they please.

6 I observe, that perfect unanimity in *every* thing, in religion, is not necessary to Christian fellowship. It appears from many passages of scripture, that it is the duty of Christians both to study to know the entire system of divine truths, and to attain as much as possible to unanimity of sentiment and judgment in these things. But when the different capacities, and circumstances of men, their various connections, forms of education, and opportunities of improvement, are attended to, especially in a state of imperfect knowledge, it is scarcely to be expected, that ever Christians will be entirely of the same mind, in *every* thing in religion. Perfect unanimity of sentiment will be the attainment of the church *triumphant*; but it is rather to be desired than attained in the *militant* state of the church. But church-communion, in scripture, is not suspended on this condition. It is indeed inconsistent with a gracious state to err in any fundamental truth; that is *absolutely* necessary to salvation. And such, we are certain is the goodness of God, that he will suffer none of his children to fall into errors, which will render their salvation *impossible*. But that his children may fall into mistakes in less important things, and differ much in their judgment concerning them, is a truth equally evident from scripture and experience. There is one sort of scriptural truths so *essential* to salvation, that without the knowledge and belief of them, it is impossible to be saved. There is another sort of scriptural truths, which, though very useful in their own place, yet salvation can be obtained without the knowledge and belief of them. I shall give a single instance of a *truth* of each kind, as a specimen of all the rest. One of the great doctrines of the word of
God

God is, *That a sinner is justified, in the sight of God, by faith in the righteousness of Christ.* This is a truth so *essential* to salvation, that no person, who is *wholly* ignorant of it, can obtain salvation. The Presbyterian form of church government is also a scriptural truth, but men may be saved, though they be not Presbyterians, and without the knowledge of this form of government as being of divine institution. The Seceders themselves will grant, that Episcopalians and Independents may be saved, under their respective forms of government. But I suppose they will scarcely grant that either Episcopalians, Independents, or Presbyterians, can be saved, unless they are justified by faith in the righteousness of the Son of God. I am fully satisfied in my own mind, that the Presbyterian plan of government is a New Testament-institution, yet as it is not founded in any express precept, but only deducible from the order and example of the first Christian churches, it is not revealed so clearly, but that men, who are the most serious, and upright enquirers after truth, may not be able to discover it, as having a foundation in the New Testament. I shall give one instance of a very excellent person. The judicious, learned, and pious Dr. Owen, after the most serious and impartial enquiry into the mind of God, in this matter, remained an Independent, and could never see the Presbyterian plan of government to be an ordinance of Christ; and yet he was as *visible*, and as *eminent* a saint as any minister either in the Secession or Relief, and a divine, perhaps, of more *universal* reading, more knowledge of the *original languages*, and of a *deeper* insight into the mind of God, than any of them can *justly* pretend to. This instance I have not mentioned, as an argument against Presbytery, or for Independency, but to show that men may be very *eminent servants* of Christ, both for knowledge and piety, and very *eminently saints by profession*, though they be not Presbyterians, and none, but the blindest bigots, will deny this to be truth.

But as I am now speaking of truths *essential*, and *not* essential to salvation, it is proper here to consider an objection, which the Seceders strenuously urge against the Relief-community, for holding communion with Christians of other denominations, who differ from them, only in some things confessedly *not* essential to salvation. Their
objection

objection is, and it hath been warmly urged by the author of *the Relief-scheme considered*, 'that the Relief terms of communion are *unfixed*, unless they can precisely determine what points of faith are *essential* to salvation, and what are *not* essential to it.' It is easy to see with what design this objection is so frequently urged, *viz.* to disparage the Relief-communion, and to reduce it to an absurdity. But let us try the force of the objection against the Seceders themselves. Tho' they make some things terms of communion, which the Relief does not, yet I suppose they also make *all truths fundamental* and *essential* to salvation *terms* of their communion, otherwise they are laxer than the Relief itself. Now, if they make things essential to salvation, *terms* of their communion, how do they know the precise number of *essential truths* more than the Relief-synod? Have they enumerated all the truths *essential* to salvation themselves, and which they make terms of communion? The world has never yet been favoured with such an enumeration by them, and till this is done, I must be allowed to inform them, that their terms of communion, as far as truths *essential* to salvation are concerned, are as *unfixed* and *uncertain* as those of the Relief can be pretended to be.

If to avoid the force of their own objection against themselves, they tell us, that they have no occasion to distinguish between truths *essential*, and truths *not* essential to salvation, as they *make every truth contained in divine revelation a term of communion with them*, the difficulty instead of being removed is greatly increased; for I am doubtful they will find it a much *harder* task, to enumerate *all* the truths, contained in the word of God, than points *essential* to salvation. I hope they will grant, that all truths *implied* in scripture, as well as those *literally* expressed in it, are truths of divine revelation, and if they grant this, and no man can disprove it, then it will be evident, that the church of God has never yet attained, nor perhaps ever *will attain*, in *this world*, the knowledge of *every* truth contained in the word of God; and that the Seceders themselves are *ignorant* of *many* truths of divine revelation. Now, if they make a profession of *all* revealed truth the term of their communion, and yet are ignorant, as well as other men, of *many* revealed truths, then it is
evident

evident that their terms of communion lie in the *terra incognita*, and are not yet fixed, or so much as known to themselves; and how should they be fixed, or known to others? To make the acknowledgment and profession of all revealed truths a term of church-fellowship, may appear *specious* and *strict*, when *superficially* viewed, but it is really a *fancy*, unfuitable to the *present* state of the church, far beyond the reach of the most *improved* of her members, and the most *vague* and *indeterminate* term of communion, that can be imagined, till once the precise number of revealed truths be determined: which, I suppose, the Seceders will have the wisdom never to attempt, as it is a matter too high for them. And till this be done, they will never know the terms of their own fellowship as a religious society, if they insist upon a profession of all revealed truth, as the condition of communion with them, in the sacred rites of religion. If attainments, short of perfection, both in knowledge and holiness, will not admit Christians to sealing ordinances in the gospel church, they will not be qualified for admission to these, till they come to the general assembly and church of the first born. The great apostle of the Gentiles was not qualified for the Lord's table, according to this perfect profession of all truth, which some so *weakly* plead for, as necessary to constitute men *saints by profession*, that they may be entitled to church-fellowship. He had not attained perfection, either in knowledge or purity, but was pressing after it in both. And tho' I should incur the charge of *latitudinarianism*, I will venture to assert, that he was both a saint in *reality*, and a saint by *profession*, and entitled to the seals of the covenant.

But if the Seceders will neither hold by truths *essential* to salvation, nor yet insist upon a profession of *all* revealed truth, as the term of their communion, but upon a profession of all those truths, of which the church has obtained the knowledge, and of which she has made *profession*, I am doubtful they will be as much puzzled to prove this a scriptural term of communion, as a profession of *all* the truths of divine revelation. This is greatly insisted on, as the term of the church's fellowship, by the author of *the Relief scheme considered*. And were we to admit the truth of his confident assertions, without bringing them to be

be tried at the bar of the divine word, he would certainly gain his cause, but it is the misfortune of this author that many of his sentiments are as destitute of *divine authority* as they are deeply founded in his own confident *ipse dixit*. The attainments of Christians and professors, in the church of God, are very different, some have more knowledge of the truths of God, some have less. In this sacred community there are children, young men, and fathers. And tho' those Christians or churches, who have obtained more knowledge of the truths of religion than others, are not to part with the profession of any of those truths, the knowledge of which they have attained, yet we must see it clearly proved from scripture, before we will believe it, that they ought to make the *larger extent* of their knowledge the term of communion with them to other Christians or churches, who have not made the *same* progress in divine knowledge. The elder children of an earthly family are too haughty and imperious, if they refuse to sit at the same board with their younger brethren, because they possess not the same knowledge with themselves. And those churches discover more *pride* and *haughtiness*, than Christian *humility*, and *tenderness*, who shut the door of communion against Christians from other churches because they have not the same knowledge with themselves, and will not receive them into their fellowship, tho' Christ hath received them into his fellowship and love. This is the way of the Secession church, and tho' she boast of *this* strictness in her terms of communion, it is no evidence at all that she is either governed, in this respect, by the *scriptural rule*, or animated by the *Spirit* of the gospel, which is a Spirit of *love, tenderness* and *forbearance* towards the weakest lambs of the Redeemer's flock, a Spirit formed upon his *own* example, 'who feedeth his flock like a shepherd, gathereth the lambs with his arm, carrieth them in his bosom and gently leadeth those that are with young.'

As the Secession-church therefore rejects the Relief-plan of communion, I am afraid she will not easily find one for herself *equally scriptural*. And here I must observe, that her objection against the Relief-church is *frivolous* and *false*, with respect to the *unfixedness* of her terms of communion; for her communion is quite fixed and determinate, and she has no occasion to enumerate

all the essential truths of religion, as she holds communion only with those, who, she knows, differ only from her in points that are *not essential* to salvation, but of a less important nature. And she can inform the Secession-church, that tho' it may be difficult to specify all truths *essential* to salvation, yet she can distinguish between truths *essentially* necessary to salvation, and others that are *not so*; that it is only in things confessedly *not* essential to salvation, that she forbears Christians of other denominations, in receiving them into her communion; and that when in love she forbears other Christians, who differ from her in things confessedly *not* essential to salvation, she never quits the belief and profession of any of the truths of the gospel, the knowledge of which she has attained, but holds *fast* the profession of her faith, and the word of her testimony.

Now that Christians, who differ in their judgment, about less important things in religion, may warrantably hold communion with one another, in the sacred ordinance of the Supper, will admit of the clearest proof from scripture. An attentive consideration of the state of the primitive church, and the useful, and important instructions, which the inspired Paul gives the Christians, in the church of Rome, will set this point in the most *convincing* light. This famous primitive church of Christ was composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians. The Jewish converts to Christianity, being educated in the Mosaic system, from the prejudices of their education, still retained a strong attachment to the ceremonial law, and thought it obligatory on Christians, under the gospel. The Gentile converts believed, that under the Christian dispensation, the ceremonial law was *quite* abolished, and ceased to be obligatory, both on Jews and Gentiles. In this controversy the Gentile converts were in the *right* and the Jewish converts in the *wrong*. The point in difference however was so warmly litigated, that the contending parties in Rome had either broke up communion with one another, or were about to separate. In this distressful juncture, when this famous church was in such eminent danger, by these fierce dissensions, the inspired Paul, like a wise master-builder in the house of God, employs the most divine wisdom and address, in composing this *unhappy* difference, and shows the contending parties how they ought to de-

mean

mean themselves towards one another. His excellent instructions to both we find in chap. xiv. of his epistle to the Romans. I must beg the reader's permission to quote the first six verses of this chapter, and to subjoin to each verse a short paraphrase of its meaning, as several observations, of *great importance*, in this controversy, will arise from this passage of scripture.

Verse 1. Him that is weak in faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. Par. Ye Christian Gentiles receive into your affection and *communion* the Jewish Christian, who is not fully informed of the nature and extent of his Christian liberty, without troubling him about the point presently controverted among you.

Verse 2. For one believeth that he may eat all things, another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Par. The Gentile Christian is perswaded that he may lawfully eat all meats, prohibited by the ceremonial law, as he knows, that this law is no longer binding; whereas the Jewish convert will rather satisfy his appetite with herbs, or any food however mean, than eat meats forbidden in the ceremonial law, because he believes this law is still obligatory, under Christianity.

Verse 3. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Par. Let not the Gentile believer, who hath liberty in his own mind, to eat meats prohibited under the law, undervalue the Jewish believer, who cannot, with a good conscience, eat such meats; and let not the Jewish convert, who has no liberty of conscience to eat meats forbidden under the law, rashly condemn and censure the Gentile convert, who has freedom to eat every kind of meat agreeable to his appetite, without any regard to ceremonial restrictions; for God hath received him into his favour, and approves of his conduct, in standing fast in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made him free.

Verse 4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth, yet he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand. Par. What right hast thou, thou scrupulous Jewish Christian, to condemn the Gentile believer, who has God for his Lord and master and not thee? To him he must be ac-

countable for his conduct, about ceremonial meats and days, and must stand or fall by his judgment, not thine : Yea, he shall be supported in the faith and holiness of the Gospel ; for God whom he serves is both able and willing to uphold him.

Verse 5. One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Par. The Jewish convert esteemeth the days appointed for the celebration of the Jewish festivals more than other days ; whereas the Gentile convert makes no difference between those, and other common days. Let both act according to their light and conviction, with uprightness of heart, but let them not impose their peculiar notions on one another.

Verse 6. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day, unto the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks ; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. Par. The Jewish convert, who observeth ceremonial days, keeps them holy to the Lord, because he thinks they are enjoined by his authority ; the Gentile convert does not keep these days holy to the Lord, because he is persuaded God doth not require the observation of them under the gospel. The Gentile convert, in eating all kinds of meat, consults the glory of God, and gives him thanks for affording him his provision, without bringing him under the restriction of the ceremonial law ; the Jewish convert also consults the glory of God, in abstaining from ceremonial meats, because he thinks, that such meats are *still* prohibited, and giveth God thanks for preserving him from breaking the law, and supplying him with other food.

From this passage of scripture, which expressly relates to the head of church-fellowship, several very important observations may be deduced, for the direction of the Christian church in all *succeeding* ages, if she wishes to be directed by the dictates of inspiration, and the instructions given by Paul, the apostle of Christ, to the primitive Christians.

1. This passage shows, that men may have *different* views, in some things in religion, and yet be *sincere* Christians. The Jewish and Gentile professors, in the church

church of Rome, tho' they differed much in their judgment, about the obligation of ceremonial usages, were good men, and acted according to their light.

2. This passage shows that men are sometimes too much disposed to make their own *errors and mistakes*, in religion, a term of communion with them, so that if orthodox Christians will not renounce the truth, and embrace their errors, they will not admit them into their fellowship. The Jewish Christians not only erred in maintaining the obligation of the ceremonial law, but were unwilling to admit the Gentile Christians into communion with them, because they would not, contrary to truth, acknowledge the obligation of the ceremonial law. And the Seceders will not hold communion with the Relief-community, because they cannot approve of their separation from the *whole visible* body of Christ, nor of some of their terms of communion, which were not known in the primitive churches.

3. This passage of scripture shows, that none have a right to impose their peculiar sentiments and opinions upon their fellow Christians. Every man is to be fully persuaded in his own mind. In direct opposition to this, Papists, and Episcopalians have forced their peculiar tenets upon Presbyterians. And the Presbyterians of the last century were for forcing the National covenant and solemn league, upon Papists, Episcopalians and Independents, by *all civil pains*, which was nothing but Popery in a Presbyterian dress; for, under the gospel, to force any to profess *any* system of religion, by the pains of the *state*, is the very *essence* and *spirit* of Popery, whatever *specious* names may be put upon the *horrid* practice. And the Seceders here come in for *their* share, as the reformation, which *they* contend for, cannot be effected *fully*, till all ranks of persons, in Britain, be obliged, by the pains of the *state*, to profess one religious system. This was the real design of the Solemn league uniformity, which they profess to be of moral obligation. And in exact agreeableness to this, they have in their judicial testimony, as I formerly showed, condemned *all the tolerations*, that ever took place in Britain, since the reformation: and the present happy toleration, we in the goodness of Providence enjoy, they
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condem as *contrary* to the word of God. We need not go to *Rome*, in quest of Popery, we may find it at the *door*. It is truly surprising to see men professing such opposition to Popery, and yet, in their standard books, holding fast that *very principle* of Popery, which raised the man of sin to his exorbitant height of unhallowed grandeur and power; and witnessing against *toleration*, and *freedom* of enquiry, which, under God, is a mean *directly* calculated to make the Papal throne to totter, and to demolish the ungodly fabric of superstition, usurpation, and dominion, which Antichrist has long exercised, over the church of God, the consciences of men, and the kingdoms of this world.

4. This passage of scripture shows us, in the *clearest* manner, that Christians may maintain that to be an ordinance of Christ, which is none of his ordinances, and yet they may be entitled to communion, with other Christians, who adhere only to Christ's own institutions. The observation of the ceremonial law, though *once* an ordinance of Christ, ceased to be one of his ordinances after his death. It was only a human ordinance, as it was observed by the Jewish Christians in the church of Rome, and yet they were to be received into communion with the Gentile Christians, who observed only Christ's own New-Testament institutions. In like manner the Relief-community are authorized, by this conduct of the church of Rome, to receive into their communion Independents or Episcopalians, if, like the Jewish Christians, they are found in other points of faith, and of good character, though they differ from them in their peculiar notions of church government, forbearing them in love, till in the goodness of God, they come to see that Episcopacy and Independency are only human institutions, and not that form of government, which Christ hath appointed.

5. This passage of scripture shows, that a church or Christian society is not at liberty to exclude from her communion, weak brethren, who differ from her in any of the less important points of religion. The Gentile Christians in Rome were not left at liberty, by Paul, to refuse communion to the weak, Jewish Christians, tho' they erred *grossly* about the obligation of the ceremonial law, but he declared it to be their duty to admit *such* into their fellowship. In exact agreeableness to this, the Relief

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hief synod do not think themselves at liberty to refuse communion to a godly Episcopalian, as Mr. Hervey was, or a godly Independent as Dr. Owen was, but they esteem it their duty to admit *such* into their fellowship, were they alive and demanded it. But all of these persuasions are rejected by the Secession-church however eminent for knowledge and piety. Had the Gentile Christians at Rome acted upon the plan of the Secession-church they would have refused to admit the Jewish Christians into their communion, in direct opposition to the advice of Paul. But the Secession-church will tell you, that tho' she doth not receive into her communion good men who differ from her in any of her received principles, she does not unchurch them, they may eat the Lord's supper with people of their own sentiments: An argument of equal weight, as if some children of a family should tell the rest of the children, ye shall not sit at the same table with us, and receive your food, but we will allow you, if you think proper, to sit at a bye-board, by yourselves. Might not the Gentile Christians have used the same *doughty argument* with the Jewish converts in Rome, and told them in a peremptory tone, ye shall not join in communion with us, for we are *holier* than you, but we will permit you to join in communion with one another. And had they spoke in this style, which is the very language of the Secession-church to all who are not of their *own* party, would they have observed the direction of Paul or not? If the Secession church covers a table for her own members only, when she dispenses the holy supper, she will certainly be justified in admitting none but her *own* votaries and disciples, provided none but *such* have a right to the children's bread. But if she calls it the *Lord's* table, and professes to cover it for the *children* of God, she is chargeable with a gross inconsistency, in excluding from her provision many, who are *his children and dear to him*. The churches of Christ in Judea did no such thing. Such a practice in the primitive, simple, apostolic age was *unknown*, and was left to adorn the character of more *refined, polished, and reformed* churches.

6. This passage of scripture shows, that Christians may warrantably join together in church-communion, who differ from one another in their judgment, concerning
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some truths of religion, which are confessedly *not* essential to salvation, even though such as are in the mistake should *continue to persist* in it, till such time as, in the kindness of providence, they are convinced of their error. It merits particular attention, that the Gentile Christians in Rome were commanded to receive the erring Jewish Christians into their communion, without making them *renounce* their error. They might use means to *convince* them of their mistake, but their admission was not to be suspended upon the *condition of relinquishing* their mistake afterwards, till such time as they should be convinced of it, and then the ground of the controversy would be removed. In like manner, after the example of the Gentile converts in Rome, the Relief-society are willing to receive into their communion those, who differ from them, in some of the less important points in religion, though they continue in their former sentiments, and to forbear them in love, till God be pleased to give them right views of these truths, about which they are mistaken. The Seceders themselves will receive Episcopalians, and Independents into their communion, if they renounce their mistakes about church-government, but not otherwise. But for as much as this narrowness of communion has the appearance of *strictness* and *reformation*, it is directly *opposite* to the injunction of Paul, and the conduct of the Gentile converts, in Rome, towards their weak brethren.

7. From this passage of scripture it is evident, that tho' Christians have attained the knowledge and profession of any less important point in religion, which other Christians remain ignorant of, such a point ought not to be made a term of *communion*, but a matter of *forbearance*. The Gentile Christians in Rome, had attained the right knowledge of their Christian liberty respecting the non-obligation of the ceremonial law, and made *constant, open, and public profession* of it, as a part of their *creed* and *confession* of faith; and yet notwithstanding this, they were to hold communion with their weak brethren, who had not attained like knowledge with them in that matter. In like manner, after the laudable, scriptural example of these primitive believers, though the Relief-community have obtained the knowledge of the Presbyterian form of church government, and make *constant and public profession* of it, yet

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make it a matter of forbearance, to other weak Christians, who, though sound and orthodox in other respects, yet have not obtained like knowledge in this point. In opposition to this practice so well warranted by scripture, the author of, *the Relief scheme considered*, says page 41, 'As far as our *public confession* of Christ, made by us as *church members*, is concerned, in the uniformity, consistence, and whole extent thereof, it does not appear to me that there can be any toleration, or forbearance in the church.' But though this may not appear to *him*, it did appear otherwise to *inspired Paul*, and the *first Christians*; for though the Gentile converts in Rome made a *public confession* of Christ, and of their Christian liberty, in the *uniformity, consistence, and whole extent thereof*, yet by Paul, a *wiser and better divine* than *this author*, they were commanded to receive their brethren, who were weak in faith, into their communion, but not to doubtful disputations. It is no evidence of this author's orthodoxy, that the *inspired Paul* and *he* are so often at variance, and that things appear to them in such *different* lights. It is the origo mali, the foundation-error of the Secession scheme of communion, that they make all those things which they have published, in those books, containing their *received principles*, terms of communion to other Christians and churches. This I consider as entirely *unscriptural*, and the more so that there are some things, in their books of received principles, that are *unscriptural* and *inconsistent* with the genius of Christ's kingdom, as I have shown already, from their Judicial Testimony. If therefore an adherence to all their received principles in their standard books, is the term of *their* communion, I pity the poor people, who must approve of *error* as a necessary condition of church-fellowship. One of Paul's received principles, *expressed* and *publicly avowed* in the New Testament, a *book far superior* to any *human book*, containing the received principles of the *Secession*, was, that the Christian church is delivered from the obligation of the ceremonial system; and yet he was for admitting the Christian Jews to sealing ordinances, in his day, though they did not receive his own received principle. Had the venerable man lived to our times, and taught such doctrine, he would in all probability have been branded as a *Latitudinarian*.

8. This passage of scripture shows, that tho' Christians or churches, more advanced in the knowledge of divine truths, are bound to receive weaker Christians into their fellowship, who have fallen into mistakes, in some less important points of religion, they are not to *approve* of their errors, nor ought to be charged with giving up *any* divine truths, the knowledge of which they have attained. Tho' the Gentile Christians, in Rome, were commanded to receive into their fellowship their erroneous Jewish brethren, they were not commanded to *approve* of their error, about the law, nor could they be charged with *giving up* their Christian liberty, by admitting them to communion. In like manner, tho' the Relief-community hold it lawful to receive a godly Episcopalian or Independent into their fellowship, while they differ from them only in their notions of church-government, they entirely *disapprove* of their erroneous notions about government, and they *still hold fast* the Presbyterian form of government themselves; and therefore it is both *false* and *malicious* to charge them with *giving it up*. Tho' I were to join in the solemnities of divine worship, with the Antiburgers, would it follow from thence, that I approve of their excommunicating their Burger-brethren? The Seceders differ from one another in some things as well as other men, and tho' they join in communion, do they give up the points in difference? I trow not: The present *frivolous* controversy, among the Antiburgers, about the manner of dispensing the sacred Supper, is a *glaring* proof of the contrary.

Thus I have fully considered this passage of scripture, and have deduced those reflections from it, which it *naturally* suggests. I have been the more particular on this subject, because it is *direct* and *pointed*, on the head of church-fellowship; and I have shown the Relief-plan of communion to have the *clearest foundation* in it, and that the Secession-plan of fellowship is *directly contrary* to its genuine sense and Spirit.

There are only three evasions and subterfuges, which I apprehend the Seceders will have recourse to, to weaken the force of the foregoing conclusions, which militate so strongly against their scheme. These I shall here destroy, before I leave the consideration of this passage of scripture.

1. They will alledge, that the Jewish Christians were

a part of the Christian church of Rome, and it is wrong to extend the argument to holding communion with members of other churches. But this objection is of no force, because if it is sinful for any particular church, to admit the members of another church into her communion, who differ from her, in points *not* essential to salvation, she ought not to admit her own professed members if they differ from her creed in points of the *same* nature. The points in difference, being of the same nature, it is a very immaterial circumstance, whether the persons, maintaining them, belong to the *same* or *other* churches. The church of Rome was just as much obliged, by the apostle's directions to her, to receive into her communion weak Jewish Christians from *other* churches, if they applied to her, as those of them, who were her *own* members.

2. They will maintain, that the controversy, in the primitive church, about ceremonial meats and days, was concerning a matter entirely *indifferent* in itself, and from its being made a matter of forbearance, in point of communion, we ought not to argue, that the difference between Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Independents, relating to church-government, should be made matters of forbearance also, as they are things not indifferent. To this I answer, that tho' the observation or non-observation of ceremonial usages, after the death of Christ, was a thing entirely indifferent in itself, when unconnected with religion, yet this was *not the state* of that famous, primitive controversy. The Seceders themselves know, that things, *indifferent* in their *own* nature, when brought into the worship of God, and held to be divine ordinances, then *cease* to be *indifferent*, and become matters of *real importance and concern* to the church of God: And this was the *true state* of the controversy; for the Jewish Christians maintained, that abstaining from ceremonial meats, and observing ceremonial days, were still of divine authority, and ordinances of God to be observed by the New Testament-church, which brought these things entirely out of the predicament of things *indifferent*, and presents them to our view in a very *different attitude*.

Kneeling, in partaking of the sacred Supper, is in itself a thing *indifferent*, as no particular posture of body is required in scripture, in the participation of that ordi-

nance, but when *kneeling* is required as an *ordinance of God* and necessary to the *right* participation of the Sacrament, is it then a matter of indifference? Let the Seceders themselves answer the question. The observation of the ceremonial law, after the death of Christ was no more an ordinance of God, than Independency, or Episcopacy, but was ignorantly maintained to be so, by the Jewish Christians, just as these respective forms of government are, by their different votaries.

3. They will perhaps alledge that Paul's directions to the church of Rome, with respect to communion, are not obligatory on other churches, nor to be observed in a *more enlightened* state of the church. Here I beg they will remember that what was written aforetime was written for our learning. Very probably there never will be another controversy, in the church of Christ, about ceremonial meats and days, but Paul's directions to the church of Rome *fix* the *rule* of church-fellowship, with respect to all points of *less importance* in religion. Upon this *great scriptural rule* the Relief-plan of communion is founded; whereas the Secession-plan of communion is *destitute of a foundation* in scripture, and is *really founded in ignorance*, and *misconception* of the *genuine* sense of scripture, respecting church-fellowship.

What is sometimes alledged by Seceders, that in a *more enlightened state* of the church, the same easy conditions of admission to sealing ordinances are not to be observed as in the infant state of it, cannot be admitted, unless they can prove, that the church is now more enlightened, than under the *ministry* of the *inspired apostles* of Christ, or that there are not in every age of the church *weak* Christians, who need to be treated with the same tenderness, and forbearance, as *weak believers* in the apostolic age. To alter, in any respect, the conditions of church-fellowship, from what they were in their primitive simplicity, is exceedingly dangerous, as the church thereby assumes a power of dispensing with apostolic institutions, and the approved conduct of the *first* and *best* churches of Christ, and too nearly resembles that vile person, represented in scripture, as 'sitting in the temple of God, opposing, and exalting himself above all that is called God, and that is worshipped.'

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Having now fully cleared the doctrine of Paul to the church of Rome, on the head of communion and obviated any material objections, that can be urged against the truth of my conclusions from it, I proceed

7. To consider a few passages of scripture, usually urged, by the Seceders, for their plan of communion and against that of the Relief; and when their genuine sense is ascertained, it will appear how little they contribute to the support of their cause. One of these we have 1 Cor. vi. 17. 'wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.' This text evidently relates to the duty of *separation* from the Heathen, in their idolatrous worship, in one of the most *essential* points of religion, when creatures are worshipped, instead of that glorious Being, who is the true God, and eternal life. This text is a confirmation of the Relief-plan of communion, which admits of no persons, unsound in the foundation-truths of religion; but *they* err, not knowing the scriptures, who think, that it teaches the worshippers of the true God to break up fellowship for some less differences, in religion.

Another passage, urged by the author of the *Relief-scheme considered*, we have recorded 2 Thess. iii. 6. 'Now we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition, which he received of us.' The *tradition* here mentioned, and *disorderly walking*, relate to the same thing. And from the connection of the passage, it is evident, that it has *no relation* to matters of *faith*, but to *practice*; for in verse 11. The apostle points out in express terms what the transgression of his tradition, by disorderly walking, was 'For we hear there are some, that walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are *busy bodies*.' Idleness and officious intermeddling with other men's affairs, was the disorderly walking, meant by the apostle, and such was the character of the persons, from whom the Christians in Thessalonica are commanded to withdraw themselves. As this Reverend author seems to be but a *poor critic*, I must inform him, that the phrase, *disorderly walking*, both in the New Testament, and in every approved

proved Greek writer, relates only to *faults in practice*, and never to *errors in judgment*. Before he commenced a public teacher, in the church of God, he should have made himself more a master of the *original language*, and then his commentary, on this and several other texts, would not have been such a huddle of *confusion* and *non-sense*. I pity the people, who are under the ministry of such an *ignorant perverter* of scripture. Instead of conclusive arguments from the *genuine sense* of scripture, he often imposes upon his readers *perverted glosses* of scripture, or *naughty, dogmatic assertions*.

Another passage of scripture, urged by the same author, against the Relief-communion, we have *Rev. ii. 14, 15.* where Christ says to the angel of the church of Pergamos, 'I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there
' them, that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught
' Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of
' Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit
' fornication. So hast thou them, that hold the doctrine
' of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.' As this author seems to have been sensible, that a particular specification of the crimes, tolerated in this church, would not answer his purpose against the Relief-church, he runs off with a general assertion, that it was every way sufficient to his purpose, that Episcopacy and Independency are contrary to the mind of Christ, as these crimes were. But with his good leave, *every* error in judgment ought not to exclude from church-communion, tho' *visible immoralities* may do it. It was contrary to the will of Christ, that the Jewish Christians should observe the ceremonial law after his death, but it was agreeable to the mind of Christ by Paul, that notwithstanding *this error* of judgment, they should be admitted to church-fellowship: whereas had they been chargeable with the crimes, tolerated in the church of Pergamos, it would have been the will of Christ, that they should be excommunicated. But for clearing the argument, I shall not rest in generals, as this author, who would have lost all countenance, from the situation of the church of Pergamos, had he specified. Tho' Balaam was not permitted to curse the people of Israel, he gave Balak the king of Moab an advice to make use of the daughters of Moab to seduce them into whoredom and idolatry,
which

which brought a curse upon them. The angel of the church of Pergamos was blamed, by the faithful witness; for suffering open whoremongers and idolaters, to remain in her communion. And particularly he is blamed, for not excommunicating from her communion, the Nicolaitans, a set of *abandoned* men, who maintained that it was lawful to use women *promiscuously*, without regarding the sanctity of the matrimonial vow, and who gloried in the most *visible impurity* and *debauchery*. Such were the persons, who ought to have been excommunicated, by the angel of this church. But what connection has this with the present argument? Do the Relief-community either hold, or plead for holding, communion with *visible idolaters*, *fornicators*, and *adulterers*, any more than the Seceders do? The case of persons, differing from each other in some of the *smaller* points of religion, and such *notorious violators* of the divine law, are very different, and it is both *weak* and *wicked* to argue from the *one* to the *other*.

There is another sort of scriptures, which this author, in his pamphlet, endeavours to improve against the Relief, and which he *miserably* tortures to make them answer his purpose. The few following will serve as a specimen of all of the kind. 'Buy the truth, and sell it not, where-
' unto we have already attained, let us walk by the same
' rule, let us mind the same thing. Earnestly contend for
' the faith once delivered to the saints. Let us hold fast
' the profession of our faith, &c.' These and all such passages of scripture prove, that Christians are to hold fast the truths of the gospel and the profession of them, at every hazard. But this author insinuates in his pamphlet, that the Relief-community do not hold fast Presbytery, if they admit any to their communion, who are not Presbyterians; but, in this, he shows both his *ignorance* and *malevolence*. He might, with *equal* truth, have said, that the Gentile Christians, in Rome, did not hold fast their Christian liberty, when they admitted the Jewish Christians into their communion, who were otherwise minded. Yea, for stronger Christians to forbear weaker Christians in love, is a part of the faith delivered to the saints, which the Relief-church is determined to contend earnestly for, as well as *other* branches of divine truth; while the Se-
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cession-church seems almost to have forgotten, that *this* is an article of faith.

I beg the attention of the candid reader till I mention another sort of scriptures, which this very learned author urges against the Relief, and rescue them from his abuse. They are such passages as respect the duty of the church of Christ to study unanimity of sentiment and judgment, in the truths of religion. The following scripture to avoid prolixity, will suffice, as a specimen of all of the same kind. 1 Cor. i. 10. 'Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.' Our author seems to apply this passage to differences in point of doctrine, among the Corinthians, whereas Paul, a much *better* divine, intends to exhort that people not to prefer one faithful minister to another, exalting *one* and disparaging *another*; but to agree in regarding and honouring in a just manner, *every faithful* minister. But Paul's sense would not answer our author's purpose, and therefore he must conceal Paul's meaning and substitute his own, in the place of it. But tho' this passage does not relate to unanimity in doctrine, yet for the sake of the reasoning, I shall allow it to do so, as many others *really* do. And no doubt such passages of scripture prove, that it is the duty of Christians to study unanimity in the truths of God, and that a perfect profession of all truth lays a foundation for the most perfect communion. But no such perfect profession of truth or communion as this is ever to be expected, in an imperfect state of the church: Christians are not more desired, in scripture, to study unanimity, in the truths of religion than to aim at perfection in holiness; and it will require much more ingenuity than *this author* possesses to prove, that Christians are to be excluded from communion with any church, tho' they are not of her judgment *entirely*, in *every* thing in religion, which she may have adopted into her creed and confession. This author and his party often *stoutly assert this*, but till their assertions be proved from *scripture*, little regard is due to them. The case of the church of Rome, already explained, shows, that all *such* assertions are an *abuse* of scripture, and an *imposition* on the church
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of Christ. Besides, it merits attention, that Christians are commanded to attain to unanimity, in the various points of religion, in the way of *maintaining* communion, in the worship of God, and not in the way of *breaking* the bond of fellowship. I have now considered the principal passages of scripture which the Seceders, and especially this author, frequently urge against the Relief-plan of communion; I have rescued them from his abuse and perversion; and, when their *genuine* sense is ascertained, they tend much to *confirm* that *very scheme*, which they were intended by this author to *destroy*.

As I have come so close to this author about his perverted glosses of scripture, I shall pass him, till I come to the appendix, after having made a few short remarks upon his pamphlet. He thinks it a *very odd phenomenon* to see the Relief-church connected with the church of Scotland, in respect of communion in worship, and separated from her, in her judicatories. But I can assign two very good reasons for this. 1. It appears to me *indispensibly* necessary, from the present deplorable state of this nation, that the Relief-ministers should be unconnected with the judicatories of the church of Scotland; because the *most faithful* ministers on the Establishment, have it not in their power to administer proper relief to distressed congregations *groaning* under the *antichristian yoke* of patronage and intrusions. As for the *Chapel of Ease-scheme*, it is nothing but a human expedient, framed by *church politicians*, to preserve the Christian people in the communion of the church, after they are *robbed* of their *liberty*.

2. It appears to me exceedingly proper for the Relief-ministers to be a *distinct judicatory*, not only to relieve Christians from the oppression of hirelings and intruders, but also from the Secession itself. I have shown, that the scheme of reformation, contended for in the Secession, is *unscriptural*; that they *tyrannize* over their people, in hindering them to hear any *other* ministers but those of their *own* party; and that they *impose unwarrantable* terms of communion upon Christians. The Relief synod is a deliverance from *these errors*, and the Seceders have found it so, in their own experience. And if they hold by their *present* plan, they will feel it more sensibly, in time coming. As to their holding communion with good men,

in the National church, it is what they are authorized to do, by the word of God, as well as with those, who are *visible saints* in other churches.

Our author also maintains that it corrupts the communion of the church, when Presbyterians hold communion with those, who differ from them in judgment, in less important things in religion. Objections of this kind are plausible, but they have no strength or solidity. I reply to this feeble allegation against the Relief, that though Christians, in social worship, cannot hold communion in the *smaller points*, in which they *differ*, does this hinder them to hold communion in the many *great points* in which they are *agreed*? Tho' the Gentile and Jewish converts in Rome could not hold communion in the controverted obligation of the ceremonial law, did this either hinder, or corrupt their communion, in the *other* parts of the Christian system, in which they were happily united in judgment? Does this author and his connections need to be put in mind, that Christians are required to maintain, as in the church of Rome, a communion of *forbearance*, where they cannot, in some cases, maintain the communion of *unanimity and sameness of judgment*? were our author invited to a gentleman's table, covered with a variety of dishes: though *some* of them were contrary to his taste or stomach, that he could not partake of *them*, might he not partake, with the company of the *other* dishes, against which he has no objection? This comparison, for the instruction of our author, I shall illustrate, in a proper instance. Though I could not hold communion with himself, when he prays, that the Lord may bless the sentence of *excommunication* passed against many *respectable* Burgher-ministers, because I consider that sentence as a *profane prostitution* of the most solemn censure of the church, and the *unhallowed* offspring of *bigotry* and *false zeal*; yet I could cordially join with him, in a prayer, that the Burgher-ministers and their people may be blessed in *him*, in whom men are blessed.

The reader has already got sufficient specimens of this author's *ignorance* and *errors*, and perhaps it may be entertaining to point out one of his *many glaring inconsistencies*. In one part of his pamphlet, he attempts to show the absurdity of Independents, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians,

terians, joining together in *public worship*, because if any of them, who leads the devotion of the assembly, should pray for his own form of government, the other could not join with him. And yet in another part of his performance, he commences a *strenuous advocate* for *private* Christian communion in prayer, &c. among men of these different sentiments. Now let us suppose, that three men, a Presbyterian, an Independent, and an Episcopalian, were agreed, upon our author's plan, to join in private prayer together, and each of them in his turn to pray for the support of his own form of government, I ask every man of common sense, how they could join together in this *article* of their prayer in *private*, any more than in the *sanctuary*? But loth to tire the reader's patience with more of this *inconsistent nonsense*, I proceed to observe,

8. That on the subject of communion, it is of importance to enquire *whose* table the sacramental table is? This is a question, so plain, that a child of eight years old could answer it, and yet its import is unknown to *thousands* arrived at the state of manhood. It is a *mean, unworthy prostitution* of this solemn ordinance of our religion to call it the table of a party. It is the *Lord's* table. For whom is this table covered by the generous entertainer? Is it covered for Burghers, or Antiburghers? for Church-people, or Relief-people? for Independents or Episcopalian as such? No: For whom then? For the *children of God*, not as they belong to any *particular denomination* of professors, but as they are *his* children, in *reality*, and *appear* to be so, by their deportment. It is the most daring presumption in any to deny the *children's bread* to the *children of God*. According to the Secession-terms of communion, let the character of men be ever so eminent, as the children of God, they cannot be admitted, unless they be the *children* of the Secession, which proves to a demonstration, that the communion table, in the Secession, is not covered for the *friends* of the Redeemer, as *such*, but for the votaries of the Secession. To authorize such a *limited* communion, it is proper, that the Seceding-priesthood should first assure themselves and mankind, that none but *Seceders* are the *children of God*; and should think how they will answer to him that *judgeth righteously*, when the puzzling question shall be put, by *what authority*

have you spread *my* table only for *your* party, which I have covered for *all* my sincere followers, and ordered my under-shepherds to invite generously in *my* name *all* my people to partake of this feast of fat things, prepared for *them*, by me, at an expence so *great to myself*? A question of this nature, when put to them, by dying creatures like themselves, they may perhaps find it *easy* to answer, or despise; but to answer it in *that day*, when the chief-shepherd shall set his throne for *judgment*, may prove a task more arduous and perplexing than is at present imagined.

To come to a conclusion, the great error of the Seceders, on the head of communion is, that they make several things necessary to Christian fellowship, which neither the *head* of the church, nor his *apostles* made so, by any scriptural appointment. This hath been the *sharp pointed unscriptural wedge*, that hath cleft them in pieces, and the cause of that *strangely diversified* form of communion, that hath appeared among them. When they made their first appearance in the nation, they declared their willingness to hold communion with those *respectable members* of the National establishment, who were *opposing* its defections: this was the *first form* of their communion. Next, they thought proper to break up fellowship, ministerial and Christian, with all those, who would not separate *totally* from the church of Scotland, and adhere to them *alone*: This was the *second shape* of their communion. Nor did they stop here. In the year 1743, they formed a bond for covenanting, reduplicating upon a long confession of sins, both of church and state, which their ministers *swore* at Stirling. Nor was this all: By their *power ecclesiastical* they decreed (it would have been better could they have said the *head of the church hath appointed*) that none, from that time forward, should be admitted to communion, ministerial or Christian, with *them*, but those, who would *actually swear* their bond, with the *long train* of the reduplicating clause, with the allowance only of a little time for those to deliberate, who wanted clearness, and as they phrase it, were lying *open to light*, after which, if they refused to swear, they were then to be *totally excluded* from their communion. This was the *third form* of their communion. Now they had got far beyond

beyond 'the churches of Judea, that once were in Christ'. But were they not a little *latitudinarian* in this term of communion, *decreed* by their *deed ecclesiastical*? for, if the swearing of that covenant was a *moral duty*, and they suffered their hearers to *lie open to light* about the obligation of a moral duty, they were much greater *latitudinarians* than the Relief-ministers themselves, who have such a regard to the moral law as an *essential* part of true religion that they will suffer *none* of *their* hearers to *lie open to light*, whether the moral law is *obligatory* or *not*, without *excluding* them from communion. After the rupture took place among the Seceders, about the Burghess oath, the Burgher-party retreated from the swearing of the fore-mentioned bond, as a term of communion; so that, if the *swearing* of that bond were a *moral duty* and a scriptural *term* of communion, they have paid no regard, ever since the rupture, to this *moral duty*. The Burghers now satisfy themselves with a loud clamorous noise about covenanting, as an *important moral duty*, while they *live* and *die* in the habitual omission of it. What do they more than others? This is the last shape of communion in the Secession. Such has been the strangely diversified appearance of their plan of fellowship, in the various stages of its progress to this day. Whether it hath now got to the centre of its *rest*, or hath yet several stages to advance, before it arrive at the end of its journey, time will determine; though, if we judge the future by the past, the latter seems the more probable opinion.

The excellent terms of communion appointed by the blessed Head of the church, are *unchangeable* like their *author*; but we see, from daily observation, that *men's* terms of communion are *changeable* like *themselves*. Oh! when will men attain so much *humility* and *self-denial*, as to lay aside their own *proud and arbitrary appointments* in the temple of God, and cordially submit to the laws of his house.

I have now brought to a period what I judged proper at present to advance on the points in difference, between the Secession and the Relief-community. And let the candid public pass its verdict, which of these bodies of men adhere most closely to the 'sure word of prophecy,' and stand fastest 'in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made

us free'. It is with particular reluctance I have entered the field of controversy. In an infirm state of health, and having many important cares, I would not have appeared, had I not thought, that the cause of truth, and the character of a *respectable body* of ministers, were injured, by two anonymous pamphlets from the Seceders: And, if I have conducted this vindication of the Relief-principles, at the expence of those of the Seceders, they have their own friends to blame, who, by their *folly* and *indiscretion*, provoked the combat, by attacking the Relief-ministers, who were giving them no disturbance. Without being endued with the gift of prophecy, I foresee, that the Secession cause will acquire neither *credit* nor *profit* by this controversy.

Now, may the great Head of the church, who, in much affection, hath given her a perfect system of doctrines and laws, root out of her every doctrine, and ordinance, that wants the sanction of his sacred authority, and, by the power of his Spirit, dispose all her ministers and members conscientiously to observe the doctrines, laws, and ordinances he hath revealed, for the direction of her faith, worship and practice, till his whole mystical body come, in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of himself, to the stature of a perfect man.

T H E E N D.



AN
APPENDIX;
CONTAINING
A few REMARKS
ON
A late Anonymous PUBLICATION
Against the RELIEF.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
Exod. xx. 16.

Beloved believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 1 John iv. 1.

And all liars shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.
Rev. xxi. 8.

THE ministers of Relief, as ambassadors of the Prince of peace, were employed in preaching the doctrines of salvation by the cross, serving God, in a peaceable manner, according to the light and conviction of their consciences, allowing every religious community, around them, to do the same, and wishing them all happiness in the Lord. They have, however, been disturbed in the possession of their religious liberty, by two publications, from the Secession, both of which are anonymous. The author of the first, if fame speak true, was Mr. Bennet, Antiburgher-minister at Ceres, in the county of Fife. An answer was returned by a minister of Relief, who had certainly as good a right to defend his principles as any had to attack them, in a manner so *unprovoked, rude, and ungentle*. Had nothing else appeared, the matter might have rested here. But, very lately, another writer has appeared against the Relief, commonly reported to be Mr. Ramsay, one of the ministers of the Antiburgher-congregation in Glasgow. This author has presented to the public a most *invidious* and *false* representation of the Relief-ministers and their principles, which hath been the *occasion* of the present publication. The author, the printer, and the place of printing this *scurrilous invective*, are all *industriously* concealed. From the clandestine manner of *smuggling* this performance into the public view, without perusing it, one might have *easily* known, that it was a work of darkness, since the author had neither the *honesty* nor *courage* to avow it, but like a *deceitful blood-thirsty assassin*, stabs in the dark, and dares not come to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. I thought it below my notice to write a direct answer to the pamphlet of such a *lying defamatory scribbler*. And, as I intended to offer to the public something, that might be of more general utility, I have only studied to sap the foundation of this author's principles, and to confirm those of the Relief, without taking much notice of him, leaving it to others, if they think it worth their pains, to pursue the *deceitful sophister*, thro' the mazes of *error, confusion, contradiction, and nonsense*, which characterize his performance.

If he had *treated* the Relief-ministers with that respect and decency, which became their character, however much
he



he differed from their principles, I can assure him he should have been *treated* by me, with all becoming respect himself, nor should he have been made the *subject* of this appendix. But considering the *ungentle freedom*, which he has used with their *characters*, and especially with *truth itself*, an object of much *greater* importance than the characters of men, I do not view him as entitled to that *lenity* of treatment, due to a *mild and discreet* opponent; but judge it the most proper way of dealing with *him* to hold him forth, to the inspection of the public, as the object of *just derision and contempt*, to every man of judgment, honour and integrity. I must therefore beg the patience and attention of the candid reader, till I chastise this *illiberal, petulant defamer*, in the manner he deserves.

His *abusive scurrility* had been more tolerable had only the *living* members of the Relief-synod been the objects of it, as they have it in their power, if they think it proper, to vindicate their characters, from the envenomed tongue of this *waspsish, petulant defamer*. But, with *equal cruelty and impiety*, he hath *torn up* the ashes of the *dead*, and endeavoured to fix a reproach upon the memory of two ministers of the gospel, now in the grave, once *respectable members* of the Relief-community, *viz.* the Reverend Messrs. Boston of Jedburgh and Neil of Anderstown. The character of these men, while they lived, was well established for piety, learning, and other ministerial endowments; their stations, in the church of God, they not only filled, but adorned: And very probably their name and memory will be *favoury*, among the living, when the memory of this *invidious upstart* is forgotten.

Before I proceed to consider a parcel of lies, which he has asserted in his pamphlet, I must take notice of a charge which he has exhibited, page 96, against some minister of Relief, whom he charges with all the foppery of theatrical tone and gesticulation. The Relief-ministers do not pretend to be so well acquainted with the tones and gesticulations of the stage as this Reverend author; but this much may be granted in *his* favour, that if a *continued monotony*, *roaring* with the voice like a *bull*, and *tossing the head* like a *mountebank*, be theatrical tone and gesticulation, this celebrated *pulpiteer* is as accomplished an *actor* as any in Britain.—To apply his own words to him-

self (if *great* things may be compared with *small*) you would think, when *he* mounts the rostrum, that 'Mr. Whitefield's thunder were *roaring* thro' the assembly.'

I must now beg the reader's indulgence, till I enquire into the truth or falsehood of some things, which this staunch, professed *witness for truth* has asserted, with an air of much confidence and assurance, in his pamphlet, that it may appear whether he bears no resemblance to that spirit, who is called the *father of lies*, and whether the grand distinguishing feature of the PARENT does not characterize the SON. As I am now to unveil a scene of *falsehood*, that has scarcely a parallel, I solicit the reader's most careful attention.

1. He asserts, page 6, that "Mr. Ramsay," now Relief-minister in Hamilton, "was employed in the Shotts, as "a probationer, with a view to reconcile an abused parish to their intruder." Here he palms upon the world a *gross falsehood*: For tho' Mr. Ramsay was sometime employed at Shotts, it was only to preach the gospel to the people, at their *own* desire, but not to *reconcile* them to the intruder. And I am credibly informed, that Mr. Wales broke up that connection, because Mr. Ramsay would not pray for him as the *parish-minister*.

2. Page 7. He tells us concerning the Reverend Mr. Ker, minister at Bellshill, "that the Presbytery of Edinburgh admitted, licensed, and ordained him." That the Presbytery of Edinburgh admitted and licensed him is true; but he asserts a *notorious falsehood*, when he says they ordained him: For he was ordained by the Relief-Presbytery of Glasgow, and the Reverend Mr. Boston of Falkirk, a respectable member of that Presbytery, presided in that service.

3. Page 9. He says of the Relief-ministers, "every assistant at a sacrament must have some pecuniary compensation, according to the length and other circumstances of the journey. Does he come ten, twenty, or thirty miles? then he will expect and actually receives two, three, or five pounds, and double the greatest of them has been given." Here again he tells a *glaring lie*, which *thousands* know to be so. I never had the good fortune to be invited to any sacrament, where such sums of money were to be received for ministerial assistance. I know

know it to be the ordinary way of Relief-ministers to assist one another, on these occasions, without any thing, but *subsistence to themselves and horses*. I have several times myself rode twenty miles and upwards to assist my dear brethren, on sacramental solemnities, paid my horse's hire, and supported myself and him, in going and returning, without receiving a single farthing from them or their people; and they have done the same to me. But even supposing, that Relief-congregations should think it proper to make a compliment to ministers, who assist at their communion, are they not *free* to do with their own what they please? What concern has this *officious, intrusive intermeddler* with their affairs? Is he not in this evidently a *busy body*, in other men's matters, which the scripture condemns? A practice, which few *chimney-sweeps* would not esteem below *their* character.

I am persuaded, there is not a single Relief-minister, who would not think it equally below his character, both as a Gentleman and Minister of the gospel, to interfere with the Seceders in their pecuniary matters. But it is no wise surprising to see a man guilty of a shameful violation of decency and good manners, who gives demonstrable evidence, that he is *destitute* of the Christian temper. We need not at all be surprised to see a person, bred on a *dunghill*, engaged in *low, dirty, and unmanly* exercises. The serpent would be out of its element, if it were not *licking dust*, and the sow, if it were not *wallowing in the mire*. But this *illiberal bigot* must have the Relief-ministers exposed at any rate, and therefore he has the impudence to assert *downright falsehoods*, to accomplish his diabolical purpose. The *greedy blood-sucker* cannot be satisfied without murdering the characters of the Relief-clergy, like the *hungry leech*, mentioned by the poet, "*non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo*."

4. Page 10. Our author asserts, with his usual assurance, "it is an unquestionable fact, that, in the election of the first minister, at least, in every congregation with them, none are permitted to vote but those, who contributed to the building of the place of worship, or have purchased seats therein." Here a fourth time the *cloven foot* appears, and he asserts a most *notorious lie*. There

are only three places of worship, as far as I know in the whole Relief-interest, the seats of which are private property; and one of them is, at present, alienated from it. In other places of worship, the Relief-people pay for their seats, the time they possess them, without any farther property in them, just as the Seceders do themselves. It is a *barefaced falsehood* to assert, as this author does, that in every particular congregation in the Relief, none are permitted to vote in the election of the first minister but those, who have *contributed* to the building of the place of worship. In the congregation, with which I have been for some time very intimately connected, when the first Relief-minister was chosen, all persons of *good character*, as church-members, were freely allowed to vote, whether they contributed to the place of worship or not. I presided also in the election of two candidates to be the first Relief-ministers, in two congregations, where it was never so much as a question, whether contributors *only* were to vote, but *all*, in *church-communion* and of *good character*, were allowed to vote in the election. And I know the same has been the case, in many other elections.

5. Page 11. Speaking of the manner of electing the first Relief-minister, his words are, "the other part of the plan, *viz.* that every subscriber be allowed to join in the election, whatever his profession, or even his practice be, is, perhaps as extraordinary, in a church, that but pretends to purity, as it is shocking; and in a still more barefaced and dangerous way, calls a *sale* of church-privileges." The reader has already seen this author convicted of a *notorious lie*, in asserting, that none but contributors to the place of worship are allowed to vote in the election of the first Relief-minister, in any congregation. And it is no less a *notorious lie* to assert, as this *lying prophet* does, that every subscriber is allowed to join in the election, whatever his profession or practice be. What shall be done to thee, O FALSE TONGUE! I put this *lying defamatory scribbler* to defiance to show, that, in the election of any minister of Relief, men of openly immoral practice are allowed to vote. I wonder, that, in the *height* of his zeal for truth, he did not

not likewise assert, that the Relief-people also chuse men to be their ministers, whatever their practice be.

6. Page 11. He says " persons, who never resolve to enter into any further religious connection with the Relief congregation, having obtained a popular preacher, make their property turn out to an excellent pecuniary account." I do not believe, that ever there were any, who purchased seats in a Relief-place of worship, who never intended to have any farther religious connection with the congregation, and till the author prove his assertion, we shall give this a place in his *system of lies*.

7. Page 17. Speaking of that respectable body of people connected with the Relief-synod, he says, " by far the greatest part are utterly incapable of rendering any tolerable reason of their conduct, (he means in joining the Relief,) make the enquiry when you please. One is actuated by *humour*; another by *vanity*; a third by *novelty*; a fourth studies nothing more than his own *convenience*, and that of his family." This staunch contender for *truth* will not satisfy himself with telling lies upon the *Relief-ministers*, but he must blacken their people also, with his abominable falsehoods: But I can assure him, that the more extensively he trades, in *this* article, the more he will ascertain his *real* character, and demonstrate whose servant he is. The similarity of his character to that of the *accuser* of the brethren, who was a *liar*, from the beginning, shows, that they are *one in heart, counsel, and operation*. When he asserts, that the Relief-people in general are utterly incapable of rendering any *tolerable reason* for connecting themselves with the church of Relief, I scruple not, in their name, to call him a *downright liar*. The generality of those, who join the Relief-society can tell, that, in joining with them, they know they will hear the gospel of salvation preached, by ministers of their own choice: And, I suppose, there are few, (this *very charitable* writer excepted) but will allow, that this is not only a *tolerable*, but a very *good* reason for joining the Relief. And I can inform this author also, that there are many of the Relief-people, that can assign *very good reasons* for not connecting themselves with his party, and especially they will be able to render a very *tolerable reason* for not connecting themselves with *himself*,

self, because he is a *notorious liar*. 'Tho' with much indiscretion, he has impeached the Relief-people, in the gross, with ignorance, I entertain no doubt but they will be able to stand a comparative trial with the Seceders themselves, upon the principles of religious knowledge.

What he says concerning the motives of *humour, vanity, novelty, and convenience*, as influencing the generality of those, who connect themselves with the Relief-church, is truly becoming a *defamatory viperous bigot*: I wish I could call it no *worse*. He wantonly takes upon him to judge the *hearts* of men, and to determine the *principles* of their actions. He will not content himself with resembling SATAN, in the black art of falsehood and defamation, but he must invade the prerogative of that *great Being*, who *alone* searches the *hearts* and tries the *reins*. What insupportable arrogance is it, for a *despicable worm*, to invade the sacred rights of Jehovah! 'Tho', like the fabled Argos, he had possessed an hundred eyes he would have been too dim-sighted for the task he has undertaken. But as this Reverend author will scarcely allow any of the Relief-ministers or their people to be actuated by conscience and integrity, I wish *him* a little more of that *charity*, which suffereth long and is kind, and doth not behave itself *unseemly*.

8. Page 25. He says, "the people in the Establishment are cheerfully admitted to the Lord's table with them, as often as they please, upon an attestation of their moral character by their parish minister, found in the faith or unsound, an intruder or not." Here again he tells a *detestable lie*. It is not the way of the Relief-ministers to receive certificates from ministers, *unsound* in the faith. And I do not believe, that one of them ever received certificates from intruders, in order to admit their hearers to communion. Those, who put themselves under the ministry of intruders, are, in general, so disaffected towards Relief-ministers, that it would be as great a wonder to see them apply to them for sealing ordinances as it was of *old* to see Saul among the prophets, or as it will *now* be to see this Reverend author *impudently* asserting so many *falsehoods*, notwithstanding his *glaring profession of witnessing for truth*. A noted proof of his *integrity*, and the *sincerity and truth* of his profession.

9. Page 61. This author says, "I do not wish to see
 " fire and sword, racks and gibbets, employed for the ex-
 " tirpation of Prelacy and Independency. God forbid!
 " nor was it the intencion of our worthy Ancestors to call in
 " the aid of these Antichristian engines to convert men to
 " the truth." It may almost be esteemed the *eight won-*
der of the world to hear an Antiburgher-clergyman exclaim,
 with such *pious indignation*, against such violent methods
 of dealing with men, in matters of religion. I should
 however be extremely sorry, from the specimen he has gi-
 ven of his *Christian moderation*, and regard to *truth*, in his
 pamphlet, that the lives of the Relief-ministers were in his
 power; lest he might accomplish *literally*, on them, what
 the *mild* Emperor Caligula (a man of a similar complexi-
 on with himself) wished to do to Rome, when he expres-
 sed his earnest desire, that Rome had but one head, that he
 might strike it off at one blow. Should our author have
 it in his power, at any time, to reach such a blow at the
 Synod as this, then really, to use his own language,
 "the Relief will be a perishing church." A blow so *de-*
cisive as this, would more *effectually* rid the nation of this
Latitudinarian synod than all the *literary batteries*, which
 the united forces of the association will be able to raise a-
 gainst them, for a whole century.

I am afraid however, that our Reverend author, in his
 usual manner, has made a *pleasing excursion* beyond the
 limits of *truth*, when he asserts, "that it was not the in-
 " tention of our worthy ancestors to call in the aid of
 " these Antichristian engines to convert men to the truth."
 A becoming veneration, no doubt, is due to the memory
 and characters of our religious predecessors; but they had
 their faults as well as other men. But this author seems
 to have such a *superstitious* veneration for them as to *me-*
tamorphose their very *foibles* and *absurdities* into *virtues*,
 or to *deny*, that they had *any such*. The history of their
 day and actings will speak for itself. And it is vain to
 dissemble it, that, whatever knowledge our worthy ances-
 tors had in other points of religion, they were very *igno-*
rant of the *rights* of conscience and private judgment,
 and intended to establish a system of persecution, for con-
 science-sake; and to enforce an uniformity to their scheme
 of religion, by the *pains* of the state, on Christians of other
 denominations;

denominations; a thing *totally* unlawful and inconsistent with the spirituality of the kingdom of Christ.

The acts of church and state, in the covenanting period, will clearly show what was the intention of our forefathers, on this point. Prefixed to the National covenant in the Confession of Faith, we have two famous acts, which will set this matter in a convincing light, part of which I shall quote.

In the conclusion of the act of the General Assembly of the church of Scotland, August 30, 1639, we find the following *remarkable words*, "And ordain the covenant, " with this declaration, to be insert in the registers of " the Assemblies of this kirk, general; provincial, and " Presbyterial, ad perpetuam rei memoriam. And in all " humility, supplicate his Majesty's high commissioner, and " the honourable estates of Parliament, by their authority, " to ratify and enjoin the same, under ALL CIVIL " PAINS, which will tend to the glory of God, preservation of religion, the King's Majesty's honour, and " perfect peace of this kirk and kingdom."

We find this act and petition of the General Assembly ratified by the second Parliament of Charles I. at Edinburgh, June 11th, 1640. When after the Parliament had mentioned the above act and petition of the General Assembly they " ordain and command the said Confession " and covenant to be subscribed by *all* his Majesty's subjects, of what ranks and quality soever, under ALL " CIVIL PAINS."

From these quotations, it is very evident, that the general assembly petitioned the parliament to enforce the national covenant, by ALL CIVIL PAINS; and that the parliament enjoined the same, by their authority, on *all* the subjects of the kingdom, under ALL CIVIL PAINS. Will our author fly in the face of the very words of the act of assembly and parliament, and has he the *effrontery* to tell us, that our worthy ancestors never intended to make use of *forcible methods* of dealing with men, in matters of religion? If we may credit their *own* veracity, and they are much more worthy of credit than this *Reverend LIAR*, they were for propagating their own religious system, by ALL CIVIL PAINS. I ask our author, whether ALL CIVIL PAINS do not include fire and sword, racks and gibbets?

gibbets? Or, if they are not included under ALL CIVIL PAINS, will he be pleased to tell us to what *species* of pains they belong; for truly they appear to be very PAINFUL AND TORMENTING THINGS.

10. Page 79. Our author has given us another proof of his *extraordinary* regard to truth, when he says concerning the Rev. Mr. Bell "though before his late sacramental solemnity, he invited the assistance of his *quondam* brethren, they to a *man* denied him." Perhaps Mr. Bell invited some of his former brethren to assist him, and was denied, but to say that his *quondam* brethren to a *man* denied him is *contrary* to truth; for many of his *quondam* brethren were never solicited to assist him, and therefore could *not deny* him. The Rev. Mr. Stuart, in Anderston, was his near neighbour, and, in point of decency, ought to have been invited, as soon as any other, but was not. I am persuaded the Rev. Mr. Bell has such a detestation of falsehood, and such a regard for truth and uprightness, that he will endeavour to expose this *lying prophet* to public shame, as he lives near his territories, if fame speaks true.

Thus I have convicted this *iliberall, defamatory bigot* of as many *glaring falsehoods* as there were years in the siege of Troy; and were all the *other lies* selected, that are scattered up and down his pamphlet, I question if any publication, since that very distant period, was a *greater imposition* on the public, or contained a *greater number* of *abominable lies and falsehoods*. The eyes of the world will be upon the party, with whom this author is connected, and if they do not bring him under scriptural discipline, after he has been convicted of *ten* notorious falsehoods, they will be *latitudinarians* with a *witness*, and may afterwards hold communion *ministerial* and *Christian* with the *beastly drunkard*, the *profane swearer*, and the *vile adulterer*. For shame! a *minister* of the God of truth to be guilty of so many *glaring violations of truth*, in a publication to the world, the *professed design* of which is to lead mankind into *truth*! No zeal for the *Shibboleth* of a party, or even for *truth itself*, will ever justify a scene of such *open deliberate falsehood*. The truths of the Redeemer stand in need of no *such pillars* to support them, nor will he thank any man for supporting *his cause* by methods so

Q *diabolica?*

diabolical and infernal. This *poor unhappy man* has afforded the public a mournful confirmation of the truth of scripture, "the *tongue* can no man tame, it is an *unruly* " *evil, full of deadly poison.*" I know not whether the Relief-ministers will think it proper to apply to the public justice of their country, to have their characters vindicated from those *false and injurious aspersions*, which this author has thrown upon them. In the mean time, let him turn his attention towards the *righteous judgment of God*, and consider what an awful and tremendous effect his *lies* will have upon himself, if infinite mercy and repentance prevent not. Rev. xxii. 15. For without are dogs, and forcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and WHOSOEVER LOVETH AND MAKETH A LIE. I hope the public will be on their guard against the writings of a man, that are evidently stuffed with *lies* and *falsehood, virulence and defamation.*

To conclude, this Rev. author promises, in the end of his performance, to meet any Relief-minister "on the " ground of the *infallible word*" I am afraid, however, the *infallible word* will meet with him, if he repent not, for *deviating so much* from that truth and integrity, which it requires: For, if his *lies* are brought to the test of this *infallible word*, I am apprehensive, that the hand-writing, on the wall of the Babylonian palace, may *justly* be applied to him, "TEKEL, THOU ART WEIGHED IN THE " BALANCES AND ART FOUND WANTING."



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE author of the preceding performance has almost ready for the press, and intends, if proper encouragement is given, to publish by subscription, a dissertation on the nature and genius of the kingdom of Christ, in two parts.

Part 1. Contains a delineation of the nature of Messiah's kingdom, in the following particulars. It is essential and mediatorial—visible and invisible—Its government absolute—Its laws wise, holy, just, and good—The agency of the Holy Spirit absolutely necessary to make this kingdom successful—The manner of publishing its doctrines and laws.

Part 2. Exhibits the most material distinctions between Messiah's kingdom and the worldly kingdoms, in these particulars. In the worldly kingdoms, all power originates from the community: in Messiah's kingdom, all power originates from the prince.—In things pertaining to this life and the outward man, Christians are the subjects of the worldly kingdom: in matters of religion and the worship of God, they are the subjects of Messiah's kingdom.—The great object of the worldly kingdom is the temporal interest and prosperity of men: the great object of Messiah's kingdom is their spiritual and eternal interest.—In the worldly kingdom, property is alienable: in Messiah's kingdom, the alienation of privileges is inadmissible.—All the subjects of Messiah's kingdom are of the same temper with their sovereign.—They are all bought with his blood.—They are all kings themselves.—They are all priests unto God.—They have all the freest access to their sovereign's person and throne.—Crimes unpardonable in the worldly kingdom are in this kingdom remissible.—Worldly kingdoms fade away: Messiah's kingdom is eternal.

All these important topics are treated in sections, in the order above narrated.—Under every section, are subjoined reflections, applying the general doctrine of the section to particular cases, and distinctly marking various encroachments on the kingdom of Christ.—Under one of the

sections, the long-contested and very important subject of national covenanting is distinctly and fully enquired into: a subject, which, on account of the strict attention and thorough investigation, that it merited, could not be considered in the foregoing pamphlet—Proposals will be issued in a few weeks hence—Those, who wish the world to see this performance, are entreated to give in their subscriptions as soon as possible, after the proposals are published.



